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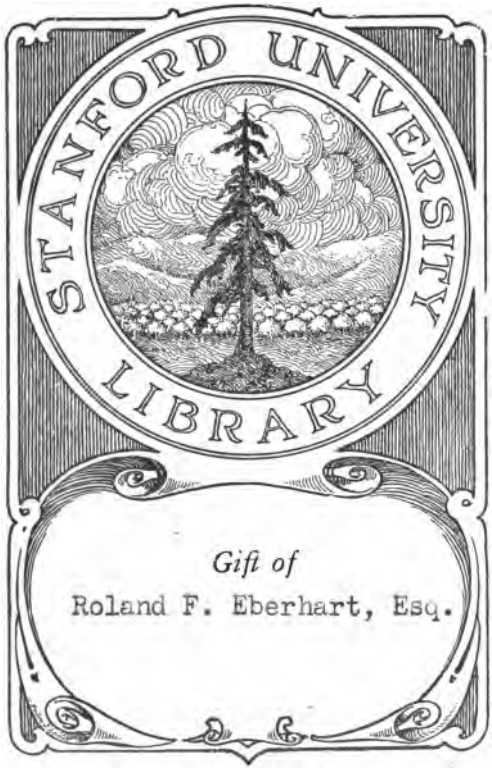

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The Riverside Literature Series

AT SCHOOL IN THE PROMISED LAND

OR

THE STORY OF A LITTLE IMMIGRANT

BY

MARY ANTIN

PUBLIC LIBRARY

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FOREWORD

WHEN Mary Antin, some years ago, wrote *The Promised Land*, the newspapers and educators of the country not only reviewed it enthusiastically, but emphasized particularly the reasons why teachers should use parts, at least, of this book — so different from the ordinary school reading — in their classes. Superintendent Maxwell, of the New York Public Schools, for one, pointed to its great lesson "that education and social influence may triumph over the obstacles of heredity and the circumstances of environment." Others remarked that besides explaining to Americans the experiences, the hopes, and the problems of immigrants, the author reminded the native-born of their priceless heritage of liberty and opportunity, and stirred a new inspiration for its preservation and increase by the present generation. It was further shown that, in addition to making truer Americans of all who read it thoughtfully, the book had a special message to teachers in its amazing revelation of the power that lies in a teacher's hands, and of the results that attend a wise use of this power.

In *The Promised Land*, Mary Antin tells the story of her own life: how she was born in Polotzk, within the Jewish Pale in Russia; how her father was brought up in all the learning of the Hebrews, but without a trade, and so became a dreamer of dreams with little power, though abundant will, to fight the battle of life for his wife and children; how as a child she suffered agonies from fear of persecu-

tion from her Gentile neighbors in Polotzk and from the officials of the Czar — agonies doubtless intensified by a powerful imagination; how her mother ran the little business on which the family depended for a living, until there was no business to run; how her father emigrated to America and after three years sent for his family; how the great journey was made from Polotzk to Boston; how financial misfortune pursued the family in Boston; how her elder sister must needs go to work to keep the wolf from the door; how the family endured the miseries of one tenement-house after another, until at last they found comfort in a cottage of their own; how the father and mother made every sacrifice that their gifted daughter might go through the public schools, the Girls' Latin School, and at last college; how she frequented the public library; and finally, how she came into her own spiritually and intellectually.

At School in the Promised Land is, as its title indicates, a selection of those chapters which tell the story of Mary Antin's school days. It has been prepared by the author in response to many requests from educators throughout the country, and is offered by the publishers with entire confidence that wherever it is read the optimism of teachers and the ambition and patriotism of pupils will be greatly stimulated.

THE PUBLISHERS.

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AT SCHOOL IN THE PROMISED LAND

CHAPTER I

IN THE BEGINNING

Two little girls dressed in their best, shining from their curls to their shoes. One little girl has rosy cheeks, the other has staring eyes. Rosy-Cheeks carries a carpet bag; Big-Eyes carries a new slate. Hand in hand they go into the summer morning, so happy and pretty a pair that it is no wonder people look after them, from window and door; and that other little girls, not dressed in their best and carrying no carpet bags, stand in the street gaping after them.

Let the folks stare; no harm can come to the little sisters. Did not grandmother tie pepper and salt into the corners of their pockets, to ward off the evil eye? The little maids see nothing but the road ahead, so eager are they upon their errand. Carpet bag and slate proclaim that errand: Rosy-Cheeks and Big-Eyes are going to school.

I have no words to describe the pride with which my sister and I crossed the threshold of Isaiah the Scribe. Hitherto we had been to heder, to a rebbe; now we were to study with a *lehrer*, a secular teacher. There was all the difference in the world between the two. The one taught you Hebrew only, which every girl learned; the other could teach Yiddish and Russian and, some said, even German; and how to write

a letter, and how to do sums without a counting-frame, just on a piece of paper; accomplishments which were extremely rare among girls in Polotzk. But nothing was too high for the grandchildren of Raphael the Russian;[1] they had "good heads," everybody knew. So we were sent to Reb' Isaiah.

My first school, where I was so proud to be received, was a hovel on the edge of a swamp. The schoolroom was gray within and without. The door was so low that Reb' Isaiah had to stoop in passing. The little windows were murky. The walls were bare, but the low ceiling was decorated with bundles of goose quills stuck in under the rafters. A rough table stood in the middle of the room, with a long bench on either side. That was the schoolroom complete. In my eyes, on that first morning, it shone with a wonderful light, a strange glory that penetrated every corner, and made the stained logs fair as tinted marble; and the windows were not too small to afford me a view of a large new world.

Room was made for the new pupils on the bench, beside the teacher. We found our inkwells, which were simply hollows scooped out in the thick table top. Reb' Isaiah made us very serviceable pens by tying the pen points securely to little twigs; though some of the pupils used quills. The teacher also ruled our paper for us, into little squares, like a surveyor's notebook. Then he set us a copy, and we copied, one letter in each square, all the way down the page. All the little girls and the middle-sized girls and the pretty big girls copied letters in little squares, just so. There were so few of us that Reb' Isaiah could

[1] *The Russian:* A nickname, derived from the fact that the bearer (the author's grandfather) had travelled in parts of Russia remote from the district to which the Jews of that country are restricted. Such nicknames, referring to some peculiarity of person, occupation, or history, were more commonly used than surnames.

see everybody's page by just leaning over. And if some of our cramped fingers were clumsy, and did not form the loops and curves accurately, all he had to do was to stretch out his hand and rap with his ruler on our respective knuckles. It was all very cosey, with the inkwells that could not be upset, and the pens that grew in the woods or strutted in the door-yard, and the teacher in the closest touch with his pupils, as I have just told. And as he labored with us, and the hours drew themselves out, he was comforted by the smell of his dinner cooking in some little hole adjoining the schoolroom, and by the sound of his good Leah or Rachel or Deborah (I don't remember her name) keeping order among his little ones. She kept very good order, too, so that most of the time you could hear the scratching of the laborious pens accompanied by the croaking of the frogs in the swamp.

Although my sister and I began our studies at the same time, and progressed together, my parents did not want me to take up new subjects as fast as Fetchke did. They thought my health too delicate for much study. So when Fetchke had her Russian lesson I was told to go and play. I am sorry to say that I was disobedient on these occasions, as on many others. I did not go and play; I looked on, I listened, when Fetchke rehearsed her lesson at home. And one evening I stole the Russian primer and repaired to a secret place I knew of. It was a storeroom for broken chairs and rusty utensils and dried apples. Nobody would look for me in that dusty hole. Nobody did look there, but they looked everywhere else, in the house, and in the yard, and in the barn, and down the street, and at our neighbors'; and while everybody was searching and calling for me, and telling each other when I was last seen, and what I was then

doing, I, Mashke, was bending over the stolen book, rehearsing A, B, C, by the names my sister had given them; and before anybody hit upon my retreat, I could spell B-O-G, *Bog* (God) and K-A-Z-A, *Kaza* (goat). I did not mind in the least being caught, for I had my new accomplishment to show off.

I remember the littered place, and the high chest that served as my table, and the blue glass lamp that lighted my secret efforts. I remember being brought from there into the firelit room where the family was assembled, and confusing them all by my recital of the simple words, B-O-G, *Bog*, and K-A-Z-A, *Kaza*. I was not reproached for going into hiding at bedtime, and the next day I was allowed to take part in the Russian lesson.

Alas! there were not many lessons more. Long before we had exhausted Reb' Isaiah's learning, my sister and I had to give up our teacher, because the family fortunes began to decline, and luxuries, such as schooling, had to be cut off. Isaiah the Scribe taught us, in all, perhaps two terms, in which time we learned Yiddish and Russian, and a little arithmetic. But little good we had from our ability to read, for there were no books in our house except prayer-books and other religious writings, mostly in Hebrew. For our skill in writing we had as little use, since letter-writing was not an everyday exercise, and idle writing was not thought of. Our good teacher, however, who had taken pride in our progress, would not let us lose all that we had learned from him. Books he could not lend us, because he had none himself; but he could, and he did, write us out a beautiful "copy" apiece, which we could repeat over and over, from time to time, and so keep our hands in.

I wonder that I have forgotten the graceful sen-

tences of my "copy"; for I wrote them out just about countless times. It was in the form of a letter, written on lovely pink paper (my sister's was blue), the lines taking the shape of semicircles across the page; and that without any guide lines showing. The script, of course, was perfect — in the best manner of Isaiah the Scribe — and the sentiments therein expressed were entirely noble. I was supposed to be a high-school pupil away on my vacation; and I was writing to my "Respected Parents," to assure them of my welfare, and to tell them how, in the midst of my pleasures, I still longed for my friends, and looked forward with eagerness to the renewal of my studies. All this, in phrases half Yiddish, half German, and altogether foreign to the ears of Polotzk. At least, I never heard such talk in the market, when I went to buy a kopeck's worth of sunflower seeds.

CHAPTER II

THE BOUNDARIES STRETCH

WHEN I next went to school it was in a new world, a world of which even Reb' Isaiah knew very little besides its name. For when I was about ten years old, my father, failing to reëstablish himself in business after a series of misfortunes that left him ruined, emigrated to America.

I was used to his going away from home, and "America" did not mean much more to me than "Kherson," or "Odessa," or any other names of places where fathers went to look for a living. I understood vaguely, from the gravity with which his plans were discussed, and from references to ships, societies, and other unfamiliar things, that this enterprise was different from previous ones; but my excitement and emotion on the morning of my father's departure were mainly vicarious.

I know the day when "America" as a world entirely unlike Polotzk lodged in my brain, to become the centre of all my dreams and speculations. Well I know the day. I was in bed, sharing the measles with some of the other children. Mother brought us a thick letter from father, written just before boarding the ship. The letter was full of excitement. There was something in it besides the description of travel, something besides the pictures of crowds of people, of foreign cities, of a ship ready to put out to sea. My father was travelling at the expense of a charitable organization, without means of his own, without plans, to a strange world where he had no friends; and yet he wrote with the confidence of a well-equipped soldier

going into battle. The rhetoric is mine. Father simply wrote that the emigration committee was taking good care of everybody, that the weather was fine, and the ship comfortable. But I heard something, as we read the letter together in the darkened room, that was more than the words seemed to say. There was an elation, a hint of triumph, such as had never been in my father's letters before. I cannot tell how I knew it. I felt a stirring, a straining in my father's letter. It was there, even though my mother stumbled over strange words, even though she cried, as women will when somebody is going away. My father was inspired by a vision. He saw something — he promised us something. It was this "America." And "America" became my dream.

While it was nothing new for my father to go far from home in search of his fortune, the circumstances in which he left us were unlike anything we had experienced before. We who had once had everything now had no reliable source of income, no settled home, no immediate prospects. We hardly knew where we belonged in the simple scheme of our society. My mother, who had once been a figure in the business world, had nothing like her former success. Her health was impaired from a long illness, her place in the world of affairs had long been filled by others, and there was no capital to start her anew. Her brothers did what they could for her. They were well-to-do, but they all had large families, with marriageable daughters requiring dowries and sons to be bought out of military service. The allowance they made her was generous compared to their means, — affection and duty could do no more, — but there were four of us growing children, and my mother was obliged to make every effort within her power to piece out her income.

How quickly we came down from a large establishment, with servants and retainers, and a place among the best in Polotzk, to a single room hired by the week, and the humblest associations, and the averted heads of former friends! But oftenest it was my mother who turned away her head. She took to using the side streets, to avoid the pitiful eyes of the kind, and the scornful eyes of the haughty. Both were turned on her as she trudged from store to store, and from house to house, peddling tea or other ware; and both were hard to bear. Many a winter morning she arose in the dark, to tramp three or four miles in the gripping cold, through the dragging snow, with a pound of tea for a distant customer; and her profit was perhaps twenty kopecks. Many a time she fell on the ice, as she climbed the steep bank on the far side of the Dvina, a heavy basket on each arm. More than once she fainted at the doors of her customers, ashamed to knock as suppliant where she had used to be received as an honored guest. I hope the angels did not have to count the tears that fell on her frost-bitten, aching hands as she counted her bitter earnings at night.

And who took care of us children while my mother tramped the streets with her basket? Why, who but Fetchke? Who but the little housewife of twelve? Sure of our safety was my mother with Fetchke to watch; sure of our comfort with Fetchke to cook the soup and divide the scrap of meat and remember the next meal. Joseph was in heder all day; the baby was a quiet little thing; Mashke was no worse than usual. But still there was plenty to do, with order to keep in a crowded room, and the washing, and the mending. And Fetchke did it all. She went to the river with the women to wash the clothes, and tucked up her dress and stood bare-legged in the water, like the

rest of them, and beat and rubbed with all her might, till our miserable rags gleamed white again.

And I? I usually had a cold, or a cough, or something to disable me; and I never had any talent for housework. If I swept and sanded the floor, polished the samovar, and ran errands, I was doing much. I minded the baby, who did not need much minding. I was willing enough, I suppose, but the hard things were done without my help.

Not that I mean to belittle the part that I played in our reduced domestic economy. Indeed, I am very particular to get all the credit due me. I always remind my sister Deborah, who was the baby of those humble days, that it was I who pierced her ears. Earrings were a requisite part of a girl's toilet. Even a beggar girl must have earrings, were they only loops of thread with glass beads. I heard my mother bemoan the baby because she had not time to pierce her ears. Promptly I armed myself with a coarse needle and a spool of thread, and towed Deborah out into the woodshed. The operation was entirely successful, though the baby was entirely ungrateful. And I am proud to this day of the unflinching manner in which I did what I conceived to be my duty. If Deborah chooses to go with ungarnished ears, it is her affair; my conscience is free of all reproach.

I had a direct way in everything. I rushed right in — I spoke right out. My mother sent me sometimes to deliver a package of tea, and I was proud to help in business. One day I went across the Dvina and far up the other side. It was a good-sized expedition for me to make alone, and I was not a little pleased with myself when I delivered my package, safe and intact, into the hands of my customer. But the storekeeper was not pleased at all. She sniffed and sniffed, she pinched the tea, she shook it all out on the counter.

"*Na*, take it back," she said in disgust; "this is not the tea I always buy. It's a poorer quality."

I knew the woman was mistaken. I was acquainted with my mother's several grades of tea. So I spoke up manfully.

"Oh, no," I said; "this is the tea my mother always sends you. There is no worse tea."

Nothing in my life ever hurt me more than that woman's answer to my argument. She laughed — she simply laughed. But I understood, even before she controlled herself sufficiently to make verbal remarks, that I had spoken like a fool, had lost my mother a customer. I had only spoken the truth, but I had not expressed it diplomatically. That was no way to make business.

I felt very sore to be returning home with the tea still in my hand, but I forgot my trouble in watching a summer storm gather up the river. The few passengers who took the boat with me looked scared as the sky darkened, and the boatman grasped his oars very soberly. It took my breath away to see the signs, but I liked it; and I was much disappointed to get home dry.

When my mother heard of my misadventure she laughed, too; but that was different, and I was able to laugh with her.

This is the way I helped in the housekeeping and in business. I hope it does not appear as if I did not take our situation to heart, for I did — in my own fashion. It was plain, even to an idle dreamer like me, that we were living on the charity of our friends, and barely living at that. It was plain, from my father's letters, that he was scarcely able to support himself in America, and that there was no immediate prospect of our joining him. I realized it all, but I considered it temporary, and I found plenty of comfort in writing long letters to my father — real, origi-

nal letters this time, not copies of Reb' Isaiah's model —letters which my father treasured for years.

I am sure I made as serious efforts as anybody to prepare myself for life in America on the lines indicated in my father's letters. In America, he wrote, it was no disgrace to work at a trade. Workmen and capitalists were equal. The employer addressed the employee as *you*, not, familiarly, as *thou*. The cobbler and the teacher had the same title, "Mister." And all the children, boys and girls, Jews and Gentiles, went to school! Education would be ours for the asking, and economic independence also, as soon as we were prepared. He wanted Fetchke and me to be taught some trade; so my sister was apprenticed to a dressmaker and I to a milliner.

Fetchke, of course, was successful, and I, of course, was not. My sister managed to learn her trade, although most of the time at the dressmaker's she had to spend in sweeping, running errands, and minding the babies; the usual occupations of the apprentice in any trade.

But I—I had to be taken away from the milliner's after a couple of months. I did try, honestly. With all my eyes I watched my mistress build up a chimney pot of straw and things. I ripped up old bonnets with enthusiasm. I picked up everybody's spools and thimbles, and other far-rolling objects. I did just as I was told, for I was determined to become a famous milliner, since America honored the workman so. But most of the time I was sent away on errands — to the market to buy soup greens, to the corner store to get change, and all over town with bandboxes half as round again as I. It was winter, and I was not very well dressed. I froze; I coughed; my mistress said I was not of much use to her. So my mother kept me at home, and my career as a milliner was blighted.

This was during our last year in Russia, when I was between twelve and thirteen years of age. I was old enough to be ashamed of my failures, but I did not have much time to think about them, because my Uncle Solomon took me with him to Vitebsk.

My visit was prolonged for six months, an interval crowded with experiences that enlarged my idea of the world I lived in. For the first time in my life I found books at my elbow — volumes of romance and poetry about people who were not mentioned in the Bible, which had been practically my only reading before. Through my cousin Hirshel, who was a student, I learned of fascinating subjects that were taught in the secular schools, and my vague longing for education turned into an eager desire to know what was in the geography book, in the grammar, in the histories.

There were other things besides books, at my uncle's, to push back the limits of my world. There was Uncle himself, who travelled much in connection with his business, and brought back stories of places, people, and enterprises that filled me with wonder. Then there were visits to the homes of my uncle's acquaintances, where I saw life ordered in gracious ways unknown to Polotzk. Altogether, my adventures in Vitebsk were so many doors opening on a wider world; so many horizons, one beyond the other. The boundaries of life had stretched, and I had filled my lungs with the thrilling air from a great Beyond. Child though I was, Polotzk, when I came back, was too small for me.

And even Vitebsk, for all its peepholes into a Beyond, presently began to shrink in my imagination, as America loomed near. My father's letters warned us to prepare for the summons, and we lived in a quiver of expectation.

Not that my father had grown suddenly rich. He was so far from rich that he was going to borrow every

cent of the money for our third-class passage; but he had a business in view which he could carry on all the better for having the family with him; and, besides, we were borrowing right and left anyway, and to no definite purpose. With the children, he argued, every year in Russia was a year lost. They should be spending the precious years in school, in learning English, in becoming Americans. United in America, there were ten chances of our getting to our feet again to one chance in our scattered, aimless state.

So at last I was going to America! Really, really going, at last! The boundaries burst. The arch of heaven soared. A million suns shone out for every star. The winds rushed in from outer space, roaring in my ears, "America! America!"

CHAPTER III

A GREAT ADVENTURE

On the day when our steamer ticket arrived, my mother did not go out with her basket, my brother stayed out of heder, and my sister salted the soup three times. I do not know what I did to celebrate the occasion. Very likely I played tricks on Deborah, and wrote a long letter to my father.

Before sunset the news was all over Polotzk that Hannah Hayye had received a steamer ticket for America. Then they began to come. Friends and foes, distant relatives and new acquaintances, young and old, wise and foolish, debtors and creditors, and mere neighbors, — from every quarter of the city, from both sides of the Dvina, from over the Polota, from nowhere, — a steady stream of them poured into our street, both day and night, till the hour of our departure. And my mother gave audience. Her faded kerchief halfway off her head, her black ringlets straying, her apron often at her eyes, she received her guests in a rainbow of smiles and tears. She was the heroine of Polotzk, and she conducted herself appropriately. She gave her heart's thanks for the congratulations and blessings that poured in on her; ready tears for condolences; patient answers to monotonous questions; and handshakes and kisses and hugs she gave gratis.

What did they not ask, the eager, foolish, friendly people? They wanted to handle the ticket, and mother must read them what is written on it. How much did it cost? Was it all paid for? Were we going to have a foreign passport or did we intend to steal across the

border? Were we not all going to have new dresses to travel in? Was it sure that we could get koscher food on the ship? And with the questions poured in suggestions, and solid chunks of advice were rammed in by nimble prophecies. Mother must be sure and pack her prayer books and Bible, and twenty pounds of zwieback at the least. If they did serve trefah on the ship, she and the four children would have to starve, unless she carried provisions from home. — Oh, she must take all the featherbeds! Featherbeds are scarce in America. In America they sleep on hard mattresses, even in winter. Haveh Mirel, Yachne the dressmaker's daughter, who emigrated to New York two years ago, wrote her mother that she got up from childbed with sore sides, because she had no featherbed. — Mother must n't carry her money in a pocketbook. She must sew it into the lining of her jacket. The policemen in Castle Garden take all their money from the passengers as they land, unless the travellers deny having any.

And so on, and so on, till my poor mother was completely bewildered. And as the day set for our departure approached, the people came oftener and stayed longer, and rehearsed my mother in long messages for their friends in America, praying that she deliver them promptly on her arrival, and without fail, and might God bless her for her kindness, and she must be sure and write them how she found their friends.

The last night in Polotzk we slept at my uncle's house, having disposed of all our belongings, to the last three-legged stool, except such as we were taking with us. I could go straight to the room where I slept with my aunt that night, if I were suddenly set down in Polotzk. But I did not really sleep. Excitement kept me awake, and my aunt snored hideously. In the morning I was going away from Polotzk, forever and ever.

I was going on a wonderful journey. I was going to America. How could I sleep?

My uncle gave out a false bulletin, with the last batch that the gossips carried away in the evening. He told them that we were not going to start till the second day. This he did in the hope of smuggling us quietly out, and so saving us the wear and tear of a public farewell. But his ruse failed of success. Half of Polotzk was at my uncle's gate in the morning, to conduct us to the railway station, and the other half was already there before we arrived.

The procession resembled both a funeral and a triumph. The women wept over us, reminding us eloquently of the perils of the sea, of the bewilderment of a foreign land, of the torments of homesickness that awaited us. They bewailed my mother's lot, who had to tear herself away from blood relations to go among strangers; who had to face gendarmes, ticket agents, and sailors, unprotected by a masculine escort; who had to care for four young children in the confusion of travel, and very likely feed them trefah or see them starve on the way. Or they praised her for a brave pilgrim, and expressed confidence in her ability to cope with gendarmes and ticket agents, and blessed her with every other word, and all but carried her in their arms.

At the station the procession disbanded and became a mob. My uncle and my tall cousins did their best to protect us, but we wanderers were almost torn to pieces. They did get us into a car at last, but the riot on the station platform continued unquelled. When the warning bell rang out, it was drowned in a confounding babel of voices, — fragments of the oft-repeated messages, admonitions, lamentations, blessings, farewells. "Don't forget!" — "Take care of —" "Keep your tickets —" "Garlick is best!" "Happy

journey!" "God help you!" "Good-bye! Good-bye!" "Remember —"

The last I saw of Polotzk was an agitated mass of people, waving colored handkerchiefs and other frantic bits of calico, madly gesticulating, falling on each other's necks, gone wild altogether. Then the station became invisible, and the shining tracks spun out from sky to sky. I was in the middle of the great, great world, and the longest road was mine.

Memory may take a rest while I copy from a contemporaneous document the story of the great voyage. In accordance with a promise to my uncle, I wrote, during my first months in America, a detailed account of our adventures between Polotzk and Boston. Ink was cheap, and the epistle, in Yiddish, occupied me for many hot summer hours. It was a great disaster, therefore, to have a lamp upset on my writing-table, when I was near the end, soaking the thick pile of letter sheets in kerosene. I was obliged to make a fair copy for my uncle, and my father kept the oily, smelly original. After a couple of years' teasing, he induced me to translate the letter into English, for the benefit of a friend who did not know Yiddish; for the benefit of the present narrative, which was not thought of thirteen years ago. I can hardly refrain from moralizing as I turn to the leaves of my childish manuscript, grateful at last for the calamity of the overturned lamp.

Our route lay over the German border, with Hamburg for our port. On the way to the frontier we stopped for a farewell visit in Vilna, where my mother had a brother. Vilna is slighted in my description. I find special mention of only two things, the horse-cars and the book-stores.

On a gray wet morning in early April we set out

for the frontier. This was the real beginning of our journey, and all my faculties of observation were alert. I took note of everything, — the weather, the trains, the bustle of railroad stations, our fellow passengers, and the family mood at every stage of our progress.

The bags and bundles which composed our travelling outfit were much more bulky than valuable. A trifling sum of money, the steamer ticket, and the foreign passport were the magic agents by means of which we hoped to span the five thousand miles of earth and water between us and my father. The passport was supposed to pass us over the frontier without any trouble, but on account of the prevalence of cholera in some parts of the country, the poorer sort of travellers, such as emigrants, were subjected, at this time, to more than ordinary supervision and regulation.

At Versbolovo, the last station on the Russian side, we met the first of our troubles. A German physician and several gendarmes boarded the train and put us through a searching examination as to our health, destination, and financial resources. As a result of the inquisition we were informed that we would not be allowed to cross the frontier unless we exchanged our third-class steamer ticket for second-class, which would require two hundred rubles more than we possessed. Our passport was taken from us, and we were to be turned back on our journey.

My letter describes the situation: —

We were homeless, houseless, and friendless in a strange place. We had hardly money enough to last us through the voyage for which we had hoped and waited for three long years. We had suffered much that the reunion we longed for might come about; we had prepared ourselves to suffer more in order to bring it about, and had parted with those we loved, with places that were dear to us in spite

of what we passed through in them, never again to see them, as we were convinced — all for the same dear end. With strong hopes and high spirits that hid the sad parting, we had started on our long journey. And now we were checked so unexpectedly but surely, the blow coming from where we little expected it, being, as we believed, safe in that quarter. When my mother had recovered enough to speak, she began to argue with the gendarme, telling him our story and begging him to be kind. The children were frightened and all but I cried. I was only wondering what would happen.

Moved by our distress, the German officers gave us the best advice they could. We were to get out at the station of Kibart, on the Russian side, and apply to one Herr Schidorsky, who might help us on our way.

The letter dwells gratefully on the kindness of Herr Schidorsky, who became the agent of our salvation. He procured my mother a pass to Eidtkuhnen, the German frontier station, where his older brother, as chairman of a well-known emigrant aid association, arranged for our admission into Germany. During the negotiations, which took several days, the good man of Kibart entertained us in his own house, shabby emigrants though we were. The Schidorsky brothers were Jews, but it is not on that account that their name has been lovingly remembered for fifteen years in my family.

On the German side our course joined that of many other emigrant groups, on their way to Hamburg and other ports. We were a clumsy enough crowd, with wide, unsophisticated eyes, with awkward bundles hugged in our arms, and our hearts set on America.

The letter to my uncle faithfully describes every stage of our bustling progress. Here is a sample scene of many that I recorded: —

There was a terrible confusion in the baggage-room where we were directed to go. Boxes, baskets, bags, valises, and great, shapeless things belonging to no particular class, were thrown about by porters and other men, who sorted them and put tickets on all but those containing provisions, while others were opened and examined in haste. At last our turn came, and our things, along with those of all other American-bound travellers, were taken away to be steamed and smoked and other such processes gone through. We were told to wait till notice should be given us of something else to be done.

The phrases "we were told to do this" and "told to do that" occur again and again in my narrative, and the most effective handling of the facts could give no more vivid picture of the proceedings. We emigrants were herded at the stations, packed in the cars, and driven from place to place like cattle.

At the expected hour we all tried to find room in a car indicated by the conductor. We tried, but could only find enough space on the floor for our baggage, on which we made-believe sitting comfortably. For now we were obliged to exchange the comparative comforts of a third-class passenger train for the certain discomforts of a fourth-class one. There were only four narrow benches in the whole car, and about twice as many people were already seated on these as they were probably supposed to accommodate. All other space, to the last inch, was crowded by passengers or their luggage. It was very hot and close and altogether uncomfortable, and still at every new station fresh passengers came crowding in, and actually made room, spare as it was, for themselves. It became so terrible that all glared madly at the conductor as he allowed more people to come into that prison, and trembled at the announcement of every station. I cannot see even now how the officers could allow such a thing; it was really dangerous.

The plight of the bewildered emigrant on the way to foreign parts is always pitiful enough, but for us

who came from plague-ridden Russia the terrors of the way were doubled.

In a great lonely field, opposite a solitary house within a large yard, our train pulled up at last, and a conductor commanded the passengers to make haste and get out. He need not have told us to hurry; we were glad enough to be free again after such a long imprisonment in the uncomfortable car. All rushed to the door. We breathed more freely in the open field, but the conductor did not wait for us to enjoy our freedom. He hurried us into the one large room which made up the house, and then into the yard. Here a great many men and women, dressed in white, received us, the women attending to the women and girls of the passengers, and the men to the others.

This was another scene of bewildering confusion, parents losing their children, and little ones crying; baggage being thrown together in one corner of the yard, heedless of contents, which suffered in consequence; those white-clad Germans shouting commands, always accompanied with "Quick! Quick!" — the confused passengers obeying all orders like meek children, only questioning now and then what was going to be done with them.

And no wonder if in some minds stories arose of people being captured by robbers, murderers, and the like. Here we had been taken to a lonely place where only that house was to be seen; our things were taken away, our friends separated from us; a man came to inspect us, as if to ascertain our full value; strange-looking people driving us about like dumb animals, helpless and unresisting; children we could not see crying in a way that suggested terrible things; ourselves driven into a little room where a great kettle was boiling on a little stove; our clothes taken off, our bodies rubbed with a slippery substance that might be any bad thing; a shower of warm water let down on us without warning; again driven to another little room where we sit, wrapped in woollen blankets till large, coarse bags are brought in, their contents turned out, and we see only a cloud of steam, and hear the women's orders to dress our-

selves, — "Quick! Quick!" — or else we 'll miss — something we cannot hear. We are forced to pick out our clothes from among all the others, with the steam blinding us; we choke, cough, entreat the women to give us time; they persist, "Quick! Quick! — or you 'll miss the train!" — Oh, so we really won't be murdered! They are only making us ready for the continuing of our journey, cleaning us of all suspicions of dangerous sickness. Thank God!

We arrived in Hamburg early one morning, after a long night in the crowded cars. We were marched up to a strange vehicle, long and narrow and high, drawn by two horses and commanded by a mute driver. We were piled up on this wagon, our baggage was thrown after us, and we started on a sight-seeing tour across the city of Hamburg. The sights I faithfully enumerate for the benefit of my uncle include little carts drawn by dogs, and big cars that run of themselves, later identified as electric cars.

Suddenly, when everything interesting seemed at an end, we all recollected how long it was since we had started on our funny ride. Hours, we thought, and still the horses ran. Now we rode through quieter streets where there were fewer shops and more wooden houses. Still the horses seemed to have but just started. I looked over our perch again. Something made me think of a description I had read of criminals being carried on long journeys in uncomfortable things — like this? Well, it was strange — this long, long drive, the conveyance, no word of explanation; and all, though going different ways, being packed off together. We were strangers; the driver knew it. He might take us anywhere — how could we tell? I was frightened again as in Berlin. The faces around me confessed the same.

Our mysterious ride came to an end on the outskirts of the city, where we were once more lined up, cross-questioned, disinfected, labelled, and pigeon-

holed. This was one of the occasions when we suspected that we were the victims of a conspiracy to extort money from us; for here, as at every repetition of the purifying operations we had undergone, a fee was levied on us, so much per head. My mother, indeed, seeing her tiny hoard melting away, had long since sold some articles from our baggage to a fellow passenger richer than she, but even so she did not have enough money to pay the fee demanded of her in Hamburg. Her statement was not accepted, and we all suffered the last indignity of having our persons searched.

This last place of detention turned out to be a prison. "Quarantine" they called it, and there was a great deal of it — two weeks of it. Two weeks within high brick walls, several hundred of us herded in half a dozen compartments, — numbered compartments; sleeping in rows, like sick people in a hospital; with roll-call morning and night, and short rations three times a day; with never a sign of the free world beyond our barred windows; with anxiety and longing and homesickness in our hearts, and in our ears the unfamiliar voice of the invisible ocean, which drew and repelled us at the same time. The fortnight in quarantine was not an episode; it was an epoch, divisible into eras, periods, events.

The greatest event was the arrival of some ship to take some of the waiting passengers. When the gates were opened and the lucky ones said good-bye, those left behind felt hopeless of ever seeing the gates open for them. It was both pleasant and painful, for the strangers grew to be fast friends in a day, and really rejoiced in each other's fortune; but the regretful envy could not be helped either.

Our turn came at last. We were conducted through the gate of departure, and after some hours of be-

wildering manœuvres, described in great detail in the report to my uncle, we found ourselves — we five frightened pilgrims from Polotzk — on the deck of a great big steamship afloat on the strange big waters of the ocean.

For sixteen days the ship was our world. My letter dwells solemnly on the details of the life at sea, as if afraid to cheat my uncle of the smallest circumstance. It does not shrink from describing the torments of seasickness; it notes every change in the weather. A rough night is described, when the ship pitched and rolled so that people were thrown from their berths; days and nights when we crawled through dense fogs, our foghorn drawing answering warnings from invisible ships. The perils of the sea were not minimized in the imaginations of us inexperienced voyagers. The captain and his officers ate their dinners, smoked their pipes and slept soundly in their turns, while we frightened emigrants turned our faces to the wall and awaited our watery graves.

All this while the seasickness lasted. Then came happy hours on deck, with fugitive sunshine, birds atop the crested waves, band music and dancing and fun. I explored the ship, made friends with officers and crew, or pursued my thoughts in quiet nooks. It was my first experience of the ocean, and I was profoundly moved.

I would imagine myself all alone on the ocean, and Robinson Crusoe was very real to me. I was alone sometimes. I was aware of no human presence; I was conscious only of sea and sky and something I did not understand. And as I listened to its solemn voice, I felt as if I had found a friend, and knew that I loved the ocean. It seemed as if it were within as well as without, part of myself; and I wondered how I had lived without it, and if I could ever part with it.

And so suffering, fearing, brooding, rejoicing, we crept nearer and nearer to the coveted shore, until, on a glorious May morning, six weeks after our departure from Polotzk, our eyes beheld the Promised Land, and my father received us in his arms.

CHAPTER IV

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

By the time we joined my father, he had surveyed many avenues of approach toward the coveted citadel of fortune. One of these, heretofore untried, he now proposed to essay, armed with new courage, and cheered on by the presence of his family. In partnership with an energetic little man who had an English chapter in his history, he prepared to set up a refreshment booth on Crescent Beach. But while he was completing arrangements at the beach we remained in town, where we enjoyed the educational advantages of a thickly populated neighborhood; namely, Wall Street, in the West End of Boston.

Anybody who knows Boston knows that the West and North Ends comprise the chief tenement districts of Boston, where people who have never lived in the tenements are fond of going sight-seeing. He may know all this and yet not guess how Wall Street, in the West End, appears in the eyes of a little immigrant from Polotzk. What would the sophisticated sight-seer say about Union Place, off Wall Street, where my new home waited for me? He would say that it is no place at all, but a short box of an alley. Two rows of three-story tenements are its sides, a stingy strip of sky is its lid, a littered pavement is the floor, and a narrow mouth its exit.

But I saw a very different picture on my introduction to Union Place. I saw two imposing rows of brick buildings, loftier than any dwelling I had ever lived in. Brick was even on the ground for me to

tread on, instead of common earth or boards. Many friendly windows stood open, filled with uncovered heads of women and children. I thought the people were interested in us, which was very neighborly. I looked up to the topmost row of windows, and my eyes were filled with the May blue of an American sky!

In our days of affluence in Russia we had been accustomed to upholstered parlors, embroidered linen, silver spoons and candlesticks, goblets of gold, kitchen shelves shining with copper and brass. We had feather-beds heaped halfway to the ceiling; we had clothes presses dusky with velvet and silk and fine woollen. The three small rooms into which my father now ushered us, up one flight of stairs, contained only the necessary beds, with lean mattresses; a few wooden chairs; a table or two; a mysterious iron structure, which later turned out to be a stove; a couple of unornamental kerosene lamps; and a scanty array of cooking-utensils and crockery. And yet we were all impressed with our new home and its furniture. It was not only because we had just passed through our seven lean years, cooking in earthen vessels, eating black bread on holidays and wearing cotton; it was chiefly because these wooden chairs and tin pans were American chairs and pans that they shone glorious in our eyes. And if there was anything lacking for comfort or decoration we expected it to be presently supplied — at least, we children did. Perhaps my mother alone, of us newcomers, appreciated the shabbiness of the little apartment, and realized that for her there was as yet no laying down of the burden of poverty.

Our initiation into American ways began with the first step on the new soil. My father found occasion to instruct or correct us even on the way from the pier to Wall Street, which journey we made crowded together in a rickety cab. He told us not to lean out

of the windows, not to point, and explained the word "greenhorn." We did not want to be "greenhorns," and gave the strictest attention to my father's instructions. I do not know when my parents found opportunity to review together the history of Polotzk in the three years past, for we children had no patience with the subject; my mother's narrative was constantly interrupted by irrelevant questions, interjections, and explanations.

The first meal was an object lesson of much variety. My father produced several kinds of food, ready to eat, without any cooking, from little tin cans that had printing all over them. He attempted to introduce us to a queer, slippery kind of fruit, which he called "banana," but had to give it up for the time being. After the meal, he had better luck with a curious piece of furniture on runners, which he called "rocking-chair." There were five of us newcomers, and we found five different ways of getting into the American machine of perpetual motion, and as many ways of getting out of it. One born and bred to the use of a rocking-chair cannot imagine how ludicrous people can make themselves when attempting to use it for the first time. We laughed immoderately over our various experiments with the novelty, which was a wholesome way of letting off steam after the unusual excitement of the day.

In our flat we did not think of such a thing as storing the coal in the bathtub. There was no bathtub. So in the evening of the first day my father conducted us to the public baths. As we moved along in a little procession, I was delighted with the illumination of the streets. So many lamps, and they burned until morning, my father said, and so people did not need to carry lanterns. In America, then, everything was free, as we had heard in Russia. Light was free; the streets were as bright as a synagogue on a holy day. Music was free; we had

been serenaded, to our gaping delight, by a brass band of many pieces, soon after our installation on Union Place.

Education was free. That subject my father had written about repeatedly, as comprising his chief hope for us children, the essence of American opportunity, the treasure that no thief could touch, not even misfortune or poverty. It was the one thing that he was able to promise us when he sent for us; surer, safer than bread or shelter. On our second day I was thrilled with the realization of what this freedom of education meant. A little girl from across the alley came and offered to conduct us to school. My father was out, but we five between us had a few words of English by this time. We knew the word school. We understood. This child, who had never seen us till yesterday, who could not pronounce our names, who was not much better dressed than we, was able to offer us the freedom of the schools of Boston! No application made, no questions asked, no examinations, rulings, exclusions; no machinations, no fees. The doors stood open for every one of us. The smallest child could show us the way.

This incident impressed me more than anything I had heard in advance of the freedom of education in America. It was a concrete proof — almost the thing itself. One had to experience it to understand it.

It was a great disappointment to be told by my father that we were not to enter upon our school career at once. It was too near the end of the term, he said, and we were going to move to Crescent Beach in a week or so. We had to wait until the opening of the schools in September. What a loss of precious time — from May till September!

Not that the time was really lost. Even the interval on Union Place was crowded with lessons and experi-

ences. We had to visit the stores and be dressed from head to foot in American clothing; we had to learn the mysteries of the iron stove, the washboard, and the speaking-tube; we had to learn to trade with the fruit peddler through the window, and not to be afraid of the policeman; and, above all, we had to learn English.

The kind people who assisted us in these important matters form a group by themselves in the gallery of my friends. If I had never seen them from those early days till now, I should still have remembered them with gratitude. When I enumerate the long list of my American teachers, I must begin with those who came to us on Wall Street and taught us our first steps. To my mother, in her perplexity over the cookstove, the woman who showed her how to make the fire was an angel of deliverance. A fairy godmother to us children was she who led us to a wonderful country called "uptown," where, in a dazzlingly beautiful palace called a "department store," we exchanged our hateful homemade European costumes, which pointed us out as "greenhorns" to the children on the street, for real American machine-made garments, and issued forth glorified in each other's eyes.

With our despised immigrant clothing we shed also our impossible Hebrew names. A committee of our friends, several years ahead of us in American experience, put their heads together and concocted American names for us all. Those of our real names that had no pleasing American equivalents they ruthlessly discarded, content if they retained the initials. My mother, possessing a name that was not easily translatable, was punished with the undignified nickname of Annie. Fetchke, Joseph, and Deborah issued as Frieda, Joseph, and Dora, respectively. As for poor me, I was simply cheated. The name they gave me

was hardly new. My Hebrew name being Maryashe in full, Mashke for short, Russianized into Marya (*Mar-ya*), my friends said that it would hold good in English as *Mary;* which was very disappointing, as I longed to possess a strange-sounding American name like the others.

I am forgetting the consolation I had, in this matter of names, from the use of my surname, which I have had no occasion to mention until now. I found on my arrival that my father was "Mr. Antin" on the slightest provocation, and not, as in Polotzk, on state occasions alone. And so I was "Mary Antin," and I felt very important to answer to such a dignified title. It was just like America that even plain people should wear their surnames on week days.

CHAPTER V

A SEASIDE EPISODE

As a family we were so diligent under instruction, so adaptable, and so clever in hiding our deficiencies, that when we made the journey to Crescent Beach, in the wake of our small wagon-load of household goods, my father had very little occasion to admonish us on the way, and I am sure he was not ashamed of us. So much we had achieved toward our Americanization during the two weeks since our landing.

Crescent Beach is a name that is printed in very small type on the maps of the environs of Boston, but a life-size strip of sand curves from Winthrop to Lynn; and that is historic ground in the annals of my family. The place is now a popular resort for holiday crowds, and is famous under the name of Revere Beach. When the reunited Antins made their stand there, however, there were no boulevards, no stately bath-houses, no hotels, no gaudy amusement places, no illuminations, no showmen, no tawdry rabble. There was only the bright clean sweep of sand, the summer sea, and the summer sky. At high tide the whole Atlantic rushed in, tossing the seaweeds in his mane; at low tide he rushed out, growling and gnashing his granite teeth. Between tides a baby might play on the beach, digging with pebbles and shells, till it lay asleep on the sand. The whole sun shone by day, troops of stars by night, and the great moon in its season.

Once we were established in our little cottage, the best part of my day was spent in play — frank, hearty, boisterous play, such as comes natural to American children. In Polotzk I had already begun to be con-

sidered too old for play, excepting set games or organized frolics. Here I found myself included with children who still played, and I willingly returned to childhood. There were plenty of playfellows. My father's energetic little partner had a little wife and a large family. He kept them in the little cottage next to ours; and that the shanty survived the tumultuous presence of that brood is a wonder to me to-day. The young Wilners included an assortment of boys, girls, and twins, of every possible variety of age, size, disposition, and sex. They swarmed in and out of the cottage all day long, wearing the door-sill hollow, and trampling the ground to powder. They swung out of windows like monkeys, slid up the roof like flies, and shot out of trees like fowl. Even a small person like me could n't go anywhere without being run over by a Wilner; and I could never tell which Wilner it was because none of them ever stood still long enough to be identified; and also because I suspected that they were in the habit of interchanging conspicuous articles of clothing, which was very confusing.

You would suppose that the little mother must have been utterly lost, bewildered, trodden down in this horde of urchins; but you are mistaken. Mrs. Wilner was a positively majestic little person. She ruled her brood with the utmost coolness and strictness. She had even the biggest boy under her thumb, frequently under her palm. If they enjoyed the wildest freedom outdoors, indoors the young Wilners lived by the clock. And so at five o'clock in the evening, on seven days in the week, my father's partner's children could be seen in two long rows around the supper table. You could tell them apart on this occasion, because they all had their faces washed. And this is the time to count them: there are twelve little Wilners at table.

I managed to retain my identity in this multitude somehow, and while I was very much impressed with their numbers, I even dared to pick and choose my friends among the Wilners. One or two of the smaller boys I liked best of all, for a game of hide-and-seek or a frolic on the beach. We played in the water like ducks, never taking the trouble to get dry. One day I waded out with one of the boys, to see which of us dared go farthest. The tide was extremely low, and we had not wet our knees when we began to look back to see if familiar objects were still in sight. I thought we had been wading for hours, and still the water was so shallow and quiet. My companion was marching straight ahead, so I did the same. Suddenly a swell lifted us almost off our feet, and we clutched at each other simultaneously. There was a lesser swell, and little waves began to run, and a sigh went up from the sea. The tide was turning — perhaps a storm was on the way — and we were miles, dreadful miles from dry land.

Boy and girl turned without a word, four determined bare legs ploughing through the water, four scared eyes straining toward the land. Through an eternity of toil and fear they kept dumbly on, death at their heels, pride still in their hearts. At last they reach high-water mark — six hours before full tide.

Each has seen the other afraid, and each rejoices in the knowledge. But only the boy is sure of his tongue.

"You was scared, war n't you?" he taunts.

The girl understands so much, and is able to reply: —

"You can schwimmen, I not."

"Betcher life I can schwimmen," the other mocks.

And the girl walks off, angry and hurt.

"An' I can walk on my hands," the tormentor

calls after her. "Say, you greenhorn, why don'tcher look?"

The girl keeps straight on, vowing that she would never walk with that rude boy again, neither by land nor sea, not even though the waters should part at his bidding.

I am forgetting the more serious business which had brought us to Crescent Beach. While we children disported ourselves like mermaids and mermen in the surf, our respective fathers dispensed cold lemonade, hot peanuts, and pink popcorn, and piled up our respective fortunes, nickel by nickel, penny by penny. I was very proud of my connection with the public life of the beach. I admired greatly our shining soda fountain, the rows of sparkling glasses, the pyramids of oranges, the sausage chains, the neat white counter, and the bright array of tin spoons. It seemed to me that none of the other refreshment stands on the beach — there were a few — were half so attractive as ours. I thought my father looked very well in a long white apron and shirt sleeves. He dished out ice cream with enthusiasm, so I supposed he was getting rich. It never occurred to me to compare his present occupation with the position for which he had been originally destined — that of a scholar; or if I thought about it, I was just as well content, for by this time I had by heart my father's saying, "America is not Polotzk." All occupations were respectable, all men were equal, in America.

If I admired the soda fountain and the sausage chains, I almost worshipped the partner, Mr. Wilner. I was content to stand for an hour at a time watching him make potato chips. In his cook's cap and apron, with a ladle in his hand and a smile on his face, he moved about with the greatest agility, whisking his raw materials out of nowhere, dipping into his bub-

bling kettle with a flourish, and bringing forth the finished product with a caper. Such potato chips were not to be had anywhere else on Crescent Beach. Thin as tissue paper, crisp as dry snow, and salt as the sea — such thirst-producing, lemonade-selling, nickel-bringing potato chips only Mr. Wilner could make. On holidays, when dozens of family parties came out by every train from town, he could hardly keep up with the demand for his potato chips. And with a waiting crowd around him our partner was at his best. He was as voluble as he was skilful, and as witty as he was voluble; at least so I guessed from the laughter that frequently drowned his voice. I could not understand his jokes, but if I could get near enough to watch his lips and his smile and his merry eyes, I was happy. That any one could talk so fast, and in English, was marvel enough, but that this prodigy should belong to *our* establishment was a fact to thrill me. I had never seen anything like Mr. Wilner, except a wedding jester; but then he spoke common Yiddish. So proud was I of the talent and good taste displayed at our stand that if my father beckoned to me in the crowd and sent me on an errand, I hoped the people noticed that I, too, was connected with the establishment.

And all this splendor and glory and distinction came to a sudden end. There was some trouble about a license — some fee or fine — there was a storm in the night that damaged the soda fountain and other fixtures — there was talk and consultation between the houses of Antin and Wilner — and the promising partnership was dissolved. No more would the merry partner gather the crowd on the beach; no more would the twelve young Wilners gambol like mermen and mermaids in the surf. And the less numerous tribe of Antin must also say farewell to the jolly seaside life;

for men in such humble business as my father's carry their families, along with their other earthly goods, wherever they go, after the manner of the gypsies. We had driven a feeble stake into the sand. The jealous Atlantic, in conspiracy with the Sunday law, had torn it out. We must seek our luck elsewhere.

CHAPTER VI

SCHOOL AT LAST

In Polotzk we had supposed that "America" was practically synonymous with "Boston." When we landed in Boston, the horizon was pushed back, and we annexed Crescent Beach. And now, espying other lands of promise, we took possession of the province of Chelsea, in the name of our necessity.

In Chelsea, as in Boston, we made our stand in the wrong end of the town. Arlington Street was inhabited by poor Jews, poor Negroes, and a sprinkling of poor Irish. The side streets leading from it were occupied by more poor Jews and Negroes. It was a proper locality for a man without capital to do business. My father rented a tenement with a store in the basement. He put in a few barrels of flour and of sugar, a few boxes of crackers, a few gallons of kerosene, an assortment of soap of the "save the coupon" brands; in the cellar, a few barrels of potatoes, and a pyramid of kindling-wood; in the showcase, an alluring display of penny candy. He put out his sign, with a gilt-lettered warning of "Strictly Cash," and proceeded to give credit indiscriminately; which was the regular way to do business on Arlington Street.

If my father knew the tricks of the trade, my mother could be counted on to throw all her talent and tact into the business. Of course she had no English yet, but as she could perform the acts of weighing, measuring, and mental computation of fractions mechanically, she was able to give her whole attention to the dark mysteries of the language, as intercourse with

her customers gave her opportunity. In this she made such rapid progress that she soon lost all sense of disadvantage, and conducted herself behind the counter very much as if she were back in her old store in Polotzk. It was far more cosey than Polotzk — at least, so it seemed to me; for behind the store was the kitchen, where, in the intervals of slack trade, she did her cooking and washing. Arlington Street customers were used to waiting while the storekeeper salted the soup or rescued a loaf from the oven.

Once more Fortune favored my family with a thin little smile, and my father, in reply to a friendly inquiry, would say, "One makes a living," with a shrug of the shoulders that added "but nothing to boast of." It was characteristic of my attitude toward bread-and-butter matters that this contented me, and I felt free to devote myself to the conquest of my new world. Looking back to those critical first years, I see myself always behaving like a child let loose in a garden to play and dig and chase the butterflies. Occasionally, indeed, I was stung by the wasp of family trouble; but I knew a healing ointment — my faith in America. My father had come to America to make a living. America, which was free and fair and kind, must presently yield him what he sought. I had come to America to see a new world, and I followed my own ends with the utmost assiduity; only, as I ran out to explore, I would look back to see if my house were in order behind me — if my family still kept its head above water.

My early letters to my Russian friends were filled with boastful descriptions of the glories of my new country. No native citizen of Chelsea took such pride and delight in its institutions as I did. It required no fife and drum corps, no Fourth of July procession, to set me tingling with patriotism. Even the common

agents and instruments of municipal life, such as the letter carrier and the fire engine, I regarded with a measure of respect. I know what I thought of people who said that Chelsea was a very small, dull, unaspiring town, with no discernible excuse for a separate name or existence.

The apex of my civic pride and personal contentment was reached on the bright September morning when I entered the public school. That day I must always remember, even if I live to be so old that I cannot tell my name. To most people their first day at school is a memorable occasion. In my case the importance of the day was a hundred times magnified, on account of the years I had waited, the road I had come, and the conscious ambitions I entertained.

Who were my companions on my first day at school? Whose hand was in mine, as I stood, overcome with awe, by the teacher's desk, and whispered my name as my father prompted? Was it Frieda's steady, capable hand? Was it her loyal heart that throbbed, beat for beat with mine, as it had done through all our childish adventures? Frieda's heart did throb that day, but not with my emotions. My heart pulsed with joy and pride and ambition; in her heart longing fought with abnegation. For I was led to the schoolroom, with its sunshine and its singing and the teacher's cheery smile; while she was led to the workshop, with its foul air, care-lined faces, and the foreman's stern command. Our going to school was the fulfilment of my father's best promises to us, and Frieda's share in it was to fashion and fit the calico frocks in which the baby sister and I made our first appearance in a public schoolroom.

I remember to this day the gray pattern of the calico, so affectionately did I regard it as it hung upon the wall — my consecration robe awaiting the beatific

day. And Frieda, I am sure, remembers it, too, so longingly did she regard it as the crisp, starchy breadths of it slid between her fingers. But whatever were her longings, she said nothing of them; she bent over the sewing-machine humming an Old-World melody. And when the momentous day arrived, and the little sister and I stood up to be arrayed, it was Frieda herself who patted and smoothed my stiff new calico; who made me turn round and round, to see that I was perfect; who stooped to pull out a disfiguring basting-thread. If there was anything in her heart besides sisterly love and pride and good-will, as we parted that morning, it was a sense of loss and a woman's acquiescence in her fate; for we had been close friends, and now our ways would lie apart. Longing she felt, but no envy. She did not grudge me what she was denied. Until that morning we had been children together, but now, at the fiat of her destiny, she became a woman, with all a woman's cares; whilst I, so little younger than she, was bidden to dance at the May festival of untroubled childhood.

There had always been a distinction between us rather out of proportion to the difference in our years. Her good health and domestic instincts had made it natural for her to become my mother's right hand, in the years preceding the emigration, when there were no more servants or dependents. And when I failed as a milliner's apprentice, while Frieda made excellent progress at the dressmaker's, our fates, indeed, were sealed. It was understood, even before we reached Boston, that she would go to work and I to school. No injustice was intended. My father sent us hand in hand to school, before he had ever thought of America. If, in America, he had been able to support his family unaided, it would have been the culmination of his best hopes to see all his children at

school, with equal advantages at home. But when he had done his best, and was still unable to provide even bread and shelter for us all, he was compelled to make us children self-supporting as fast as it was practicable. There was no choosing possible; Frieda was the oldest, the strongest, the best prepared, and the only one who was of legal age to be put to work.

My father has nothing to answer for. He divided the world between his children in accordance with the laws of the country and the compulsion of his circumstances.

The two of us stood a moment in the doorway of the tenement house on Arlington Street, that wonderful September morning when I first went to school. It was I that ran away, on winged feet of joy and expectation; it was she whose feet were bound in the treadmill of daily toil. And I was so blind that I did not see that the glory lay on her, and not on me.

Father himself conducted us to school. He would not have delegated that mission to the President of the United States. He had awaited the day with impatience equal to mine, and the visions he saw as he hurried us over the sun-flecked pavements transcended all my dreams. Almost his first act on landing on American soil, three years before, had been his application for naturalization. He had taken the remaining steps in the process with eager promptness, and at the earliest moment allowed by the law, he became a citizen of the United States. It is true that he had left home in search of bread for his hungry family, but he went blessing the necessity that drove him to America. The boasted freedom of the New World meant to him far more than the right to reside, travel, and work wherever he pleased; it meant the freedom to speak his thoughts, to throw off the shackles of super-

stition, to test his own fate, unhindered by political or religious tyranny.

Three years passed in sordid struggle and disappointment. He was not prepared to make a living even in America, where the day laborer eats wheat instead of rye. He had started life with a poor constitution that a youth of extreme poverty could not mend. Short rations and long hours in the confinement of the heder had been his portion from earliest boyhood; and while he satisfied the family ambition for Hebrew scholarship, he received no practical training that he could fall back on for a living. Add to this sorry equipment the immense hindrance of not knowing the language and customs of the new country, and my father's repeated failures in business are largely accounted for.

Had bread been the sole object of his quest, his first three years of America would have left him utterly disheartened. But for him, as for thousands like him from the Old World, America abounded in things that are more than bread. Intellectual opportunities crowded him on all sides, and of these he sought to make the utmost use. His struggle for a bare living left him no time to take advantage of the public evening school; but he lost nothing of what was to be learned through reading, through attendance at public meetings, through exercising the rights of citizenship. Even here he was hindered by a natural inability to acquire the English language. In time, indeed, he learned to read, to follow a conversation or lecture; but he never learned to write correctly, and his pronunciation remains extremely foreign to this day.

If education, culture, the higher life were shining things to be worshipped from afar, he had still a means left whereby he could draw one step nearer to them. He

could send his children to school, to learn all those things that he knew by fame to be desirable. The common school, at least, perhaps high school; for one or two, perhaps even college! His children should be students, should fill his house with books and intellectual company; and thus he would walk by proxy in the Elysian Fields of liberal learning. As for the children themselves, he knew no surer way to their advancement and happiness.

So it was with a heart full of longing and hope that my father led us to school on that first day. He took long strides in his eagerness, the rest of us running and hopping to keep up.

At last the four of us stood around the teacher's desk; and my father, in his impossible English, gave us over in her charge, with some broken word of his hopes for us that his swelling heart could no longer contain. And I venture to say that Miss Nixon guessed what my father's best English could not convey. I think she divined that by the simple act of delivering our school certificates to her he took possession of America.

CHAPTER VII

INITIATION

I WAS not a bit too large for my little chair and desk in the baby class, but my mind, of course, was too mature by six or seven years for the work. So as soon as I could understand what the teacher said in class, I was advanced to the second grade. This was within a week after Miss Nixon took me in hand. Rapid progress, that; but Miss Nixon knew her business, and I dare say I helped.

There were about half a dozen of us beginners in English, in age from six to fifteen. Miss Nixon made a special class of us, and aided us so skilfully and earnestly in our endeavors to "see-a-cat," and "hear-a-dog-bark," and "look-at-the-hen," that we turned over page after page of the ravishing history, eager to find out how the common world looked, smelled, and tasted in the strange speech. The teacher knew just when to let us help each other out with a word in our own tongue,— it happened that we were all Jews, — and so, working all together, we actually covered more ground in a lesson than the native classes, composed entirely of the little tots.

But we stuck — stuck fast — at the definite article; and sometimes the lesson resolved itself into a species of lingual gymnastics, in which we all looked as if we meant to bite our tongues off. Miss Nixon was pretty, and she must have looked well with her white teeth showing in the act; but at the time I was too solemnly occupied to admire her looks. I did take great pleasure in her smile of approval, whenever I pronounced well; and her pa-

tience and perseverance in struggling with us over that thick little word are becoming to her even now, after fifteen years. It is not her fault if any of us to-day give a buzzing sound to the dreadful English *th*.

Whenever the teachers did anything special to help me over my private difficulties, my gratitude went out to them, silently. It meant so much to me that they halted the lesson to give me a lift, that I needs must love them for it. Dear Miss Carrol, of the second grade, would be amazed to hear what small things I remember, all because I was so impressed at the time with her readiness and sweetness in taking notice of my difficulties.

Says Miss Carrol, looking straight at me: —

"If Johnnie has three marbles, and Charlie has twice as many, how many marbles has Charlie?"

I raise my hand for permission to speak.

"Teacher, I don't know vhat is tvice."

Teacher beckons me to her, and whispers to me the meaning of the strange word, and I am able to write the sum correctly. It 's all in the day's work with her; with me, it is a special act of kindness and efficiency.

She whom I found in the next grade became so dear a friend that I can hardly name her with the rest, though I mention none of them lightly. Her approval was always dear to me, first because she was "Teacher," and afterwards, as long as she lived, because she was my Miss Dillingham.

I remember to this day what a struggle we had over the word "water," Miss Dillingham and I. It seemed as if I could not give the sound of *w;* I said "vater" every time. Patiently my teacher worked with me, inventing mouth exercises for me, to get my stubborn lips to produce that *w;* and when at last I could say "village" and "water" in rapid alternation, without misplacing the two initials, that memorable word was

sweet on my lips. For we had conquered, and Teacher was pleased.

There is a record of my early progress in English much better than my recollections, however accurate and definite these may be. I have several reasons for introducing it here. First, it shows what the Russian Jew can do with an adopted language; next, it proves that vigilance of our public-school teachers of which I spoke; and last, I am proud of it! That is an unnecessary confession, but I could not be satisfied to insert the record here, with my vanity unavowed.

This is the document, copied from an educational journal, a tattered copy of which lies in my lap as I write — treasured for fifteen years, you see, by my vanity.

EDITOR "PRIMARY EDUCATION": —

This is the uncorrected paper of a Russian child twelve years old, who had studied English only four months. She had never, until September, been to school even in her own country and has heard English spoken *only* at school. I shall be glad if the paper of my pupil and the above explanation may appear in your paper.

M. S. DILLINGHAM.

CHELSEA, MASS.

SNOW

Snow is frozen moisture which comes from the clouds.

Now the snow is coming down in feather-flakes, which makes nice snow-balls. But there is still one kind of snow more. This kind of snow is called snow-crystals, for it comes down in little curly balls. These snow-crystals are n't quiet as good for snow-balls as feather-flakes, for they (the snow-crystals) are dry: so they can't keep together as feather-flakes do.

The snow is dear to some children for they like sleighing.

As I said at the top — the snow comes from the clouds.

Now the trees are bare, and no flowers are to see in the

fields and gardens, (we all know why) and the whole world seems like asleep without the happy birds songs which left us till spring. But the snow which drove away all these pretty and happy things, try, (as I think) not to make us at all unhappy; they covered up the branches of the trees, the fields, the gardens and houses, and the whole world looks like dressed in a beautiful white — instead of green — dress, with the sky looking down on it with a pale face.

And so the people can find some joy in it, too, without the happy summer.

MARY ANTIN.

And now that it stands there, with *her* name over it, I am ashamed of my flippant talk about vanity. More to me than all the praise I could hope to win by the conquest of fifty languages is the association of this dear friend with my earliest efforts at writing; and it pleases me to remember that to her I owe my very first appearance in print. Vanity is the least part of it, when I remember how she called me to her desk, one day after school was out, and showed me my composition — my own words, that I had written out of my own head — printed out, clear black and white, with my name at the end! Nothing so wonderful had ever happened to me before. My whole consciousness was suddenly transformed. I suppose that was the moment when I became a writer. I always loved to write, — I wrote letters whenever I had an excuse, — yet it had never occurred to me to sit down and write my thoughts for no person in particular, merely to put the world on paper. But now, as I read my own words, in a delicious confusion, the idea was born. I stared at my name: MARY ANTIN. Was that really I? The printed characters composing it seemed strange to me all of a sudden. If that was my name, and those were the words out of my own head, what

relation did it all have to *me*, who was alone there with Miss Dillingham, and the printed page between us? Why, it meant that I could write again, and see my writing printed for people to read! I could write many, many, many things: I could write a book! The idea was so huge, so bewildering, that my mind scarcely could accommodate it.

I do not know what my teacher said to me; probably very little. It was her way to say only a little, and look at me, and trust me to understand. Once she had occasion to lecture me about living a shut-up life; she wanted me to go outdoors. I had been repeatedly scolded and reproved on that score by other people, but I had only laughed, saying that I was too happy to change my ways. But when Miss Dillingham spoke to me, I saw that it was a serious matter; and yet she only said a few words, and looked at me with that smile of hers that was only half a smile, and the rest a meaning.

I never heard of any one who was so watched and coaxed, so passed along from hand to helping hand, as was I. I always had friends. They sprang up everywhere, as if they had stood waiting for me to come. So here was my teacher, the moment she saw that I could give a good paraphrase of her talk on "Snow," bent on finding out what more I could do. One day she asked me if I had ever written poetry. I had not, but I went home and tried. I believe it was more snow, and I know it was wretched. I wish I could produce a copy of that early effusion; it would prove that my judgment is not severe. Wretched it was, — worse, a great deal, than reams of poetry that is written by children about whom there is no fuss made. But Miss Dillingham was not discouraged. She saw that I had no idea of metre, so she proceeded to teach me. We repeated miles of poetry together,

smooth lines that sang themselves, mostly out of Longfellow. Then I would go home and write — oh, about the snow in our back yard! — but when Miss Dillingham came to read my verses, they limped and they lagged and they dragged, and there was no tune that would fit them.

At last came the moment of illumination: I saw where my trouble lay. I had supposed that my lines matched when they had an equal number of syllables, taking no account of accent. Now I knew better; now I could write poetry! The everlasting snow melted at last, and the mud puddles dried in the spring sun, and the grass on the common was green, and still I wrote poetry! Again I wish I had some example of my springtime rhapsodies, the veriest rubbish of the sort that ever a child perpetrated. Lizzie McDee, who had red hair and freckles, and a Sunday-school manner on weekdays, and was below me in the class, did a great deal better. We used to compare verses; and while I do not remember that I ever had the grace to own that she was the better poet, I do know that I secretly wondered why the teachers did not invite her to stay after school and study poetry, while they took so much pains with me. But so it was always with me: somebody did something for me all the time.

Making fair allowance for my youth, retarded education, and strangeness to the language, it must still be admitted that I never wrote good verse. But I loved to read it. My half-hours with Miss Dillingham were full of delight for me, quite apart from my new-born ambition to become a writer. What, then, was my joy, when Miss Dillingham, just before locking up her desk one evening, presented me with a volume of Longfellow's poems! It was a thin volume of selections, but to me it was a bottomless treasure.

I had never owned a book before. The sense of possession alone was a source of bliss, and this book I already knew and loved. And so Miss Dillingham, who was my first American friend, and who first put my name in print, was also the one to start my library. Deep is my regret when I consider that she was gone before I had given much of an account of all her gifts of love and service to me.

About the middle of the year I was promoted to the grammar school. Then it was that I walked on air. For I said to myself that I was a *student* now, in earnest, not merely a school-girl learning to spell and cipher. I was going to learn out-of-the-way things, things that had nothing to do with ordinary life — things to *know*. When I walked home afternoons, with the great big geography book under my arm, it seemed to me that the earth was conscious of my step. Sometimes I carried home half the books in my desk, not because I should need them, but because I loved to hold them; and also because I loved to be seen carrying books. It was a badge of scholarship, and I was proud of it. I remembered the days in Vitebsk when I used to watch my cousin Hirshel start for school in the morning, every thread of his student's uniform, every worn copybook in his satchel, glorified in my envious eyes. And now I was myself as he: aye, greater than he; for I knew English, and I could write poetry.

CHAPTER VIII

"MY COUNTRY"

THE public school has done its best for us foreigners, and for the country, when it has made us into good Americans. I am glad it is mine to tell how the miracle was wrought in one case. You shall be glad to hear of it, you born Americans; for it is the story of the growth of your country; of the flocking of your brothers and sisters from the far ends of the earth to the flag you love; of the recruiting of your armies of workers, thinkers, and leaders. And you will be glad to hear of it, my comrades in adoption; for it is a rehearsal of your own experience, the thrill and wonder of which your own hearts have felt.

How long would you say, wise reader, it takes to make an American? By the middle of my second year in school I had reached the sixth grade. When, after the Christmas holidays, we began to study the life of Washington, running through a summary of the Revolution, and the early days of the Republic, it seemed to me that all my reading and study had been idle until then. The reader, the arithmetic, the song book, that had so fascinated me until now, became suddenly sober exercise books, tools wherewith to hew a way to the source of inspiration. When the teacher read to us out of a big book with many bookmarks in it, I sat rigid with attention in my little chair, my hands tightly clasped on the edge of my desk; and I painfully held my breath, to prevent sighs of disappointment escaping, as I saw the teacher skip the parts between the bookmarks. When the

class read, and it came my turn, my voice shook and the book trembled in my hands. I could not pronounce the name of George Washington without a pause. Never had I prayed, never had I chanted the songs of David, never had I called upon the Most Holy, in such utter reverence and worship as I repeated the simple sentences of my child's story of the patriot. I gazed with adoration at the portraits of George and Martha Washington, till I could see them with my eyes shut. And whereas formerly my self-consciousness had bordered on conceit, and I thought myself an uncommon person, parading my school-books through the streets, and swelling with pride when a teacher detained me in conversation, now I grew humble all at once, seeing how insignificant I was beside the Great.

As I read about the noble boy who would not tell a lie to save himself from punishment, I was for the first time truly repentant of my sins. Formerly I had fasted and prayed and made sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, but it was more than half play, in mimicry of my elders. I had no real horror of sin, and I knew so many ways of escaping punishment. I am sure my family, my neighbors, my teachers in Polotzk — all my world, in fact — strove together, by example and precept, to teach me goodness. But goodness, as I had known it, was not inimitable. One could be downright good if one really wanted to. One could be learned if one had books and teachers. But a human being strictly good, perfectly wise, and unfailingly valiant, all at the same time, I had never heard or dreamed of. This wonderful George Washington was as inimitable as he was irreproachable. Even if I had never, never told a lie, I could not compare myself to George Washington; for I was not brave — I was afraid to go out when snowballs whizzed — and I

could never be the First President of the United States.

So I was forced to revise my own estimate of myself. But the twin of my new-born humility, paradoxical as it may seem, was a sense of dignity I had never known before. For if I found that I was a person of small consequence, I discovered at the same time that I was more nobly related than I had ever supposed. I had relatives and friends who were notable people by the old standards, — I had never been ashamed of my family, — but this George Washington, who died long before I was born, was like a king in greatness, and he and I were Fellow Citizens. There was a great deal about Fellow Citizens in the patriotic literature we read at this time; and I knew from my father how he was a Citizen, through the process of naturalization, and how I also was a citizen, by virtue of my relation to him. Undoubtedly I was a Fellow Citizen, and George Washington was another. It thrilled me to realize what sudden greatness had fallen on me; and at the same time it sobered me, as with a sense of responsibility. I strove to conduct myself as befitted a Fellow Citizen.

Before books came into my life, I was given to star-gazing and daydreaming. When books were given me, I fell upon them as a glutton pounces on his meat after a period of enforced starvation. I lived with my nose in a book, and took no notice of the alternations of the sun and stars. But now, after the advent of George Washington and the American Revolution, I began to dream again. I strayed on the common after school instead of hurrying home to read. I hung on fence rails, my pet book forgotten under my arm, and gazed off to the yellow-streaked February sunset, and beyond, and beyond. I was no longer the central figure of my dreams; the dry weeds in the lane crackled beneath the tread of Heroes.

What more could America give a child? Ah, much more! As I read how the patriots planned the Revolution, and the women gave their sons to die in battle, and the heroes led to victory, and the rejoicing people set up the Republic, it dawned on me gradually what was meant by *my country*. The people all desiring noble things, and striving for them together, defying their oppressors, giving their lives for each other —all this it was that made *my country*. It was not a thing that I *understood;* I could not go home and tell Frieda about it, as I told her other things I learned at school. But I knew one could say "my country" and *feel* it, as one felt "God" or "myself." My teacher, my schoolmates, Miss Dillingham, George Washington himself could not mean more than I when they said "my country," after I had once felt it. For the country was for all the citizens, and *I was a Citizen*. And when we stood up to sing "America," I shouted the words with all my might. I was in very earnest proclaiming to the world my love for my new-found country.

"I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills."

Boston Harbor, Crescent Beach, Chelsea Square — all was hallowed ground to me. As the day approached when the school was to hold exercises in honor of Washington's Birthday, the halls resounded at all hours with the strains of patriotic songs; and I, who was a model of the attentive pupil, more than once lost my place in the lesson as I strained to hear, through closed doors, some neighboring class rehearsing "The Star-Spangled Banner." If the doors happened to open, and the chorus broke out unveiled —

"O! say, does that Star-Spangled Banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave?" —

delicious tremors ran up and down my spine, and I was faint with suppressed enthusiasm.

On the day of the Washington celebration I recited a poem that I had composed in my enthusiasm. But "composed" is not the word. The process of putting on paper the sentiments that seethed in my soul was really very discomposing. I dug the words out of my heart, squeezed the rhymes out of my brain, forced the missing syllables out of their hiding-places in the dictionary. May I never again know such travail of the spirit as I endured during the fevered days when I was engaged on the poem. It was not as if I wanted to say that snow was white or grass was green. I could do that without a dictionary. It was a question now of the loftiest sentiments, of the most abstract truths, the names of which were very new in my vocabulary. It was necessary to use polysyllables, and plenty of them; and where to find rhymes for such words as "tyranny," "freedom," and "justice," when you had less than two years' acquaintance with English! The name I wished to celebrate was the most difficult of all. Nothing but "Washington" rhymed with "Washington." It was a most ambitious undertaking, but my heart could find no rest till it had proclaimed itself to the world; so I wrestled with my difficulties, and spared not ink, till inspiration perched on my penpoint, and my soul gave up its best.

When I had done, I was myself impressed with the length, gravity, and nobility of my poem. My father was overcome with emotion as he read it. His hands trembled as he held the paper to the light, and the mist gathered in his eyes. My teacher, Miss Dwight, was plainly astonished at my performance, and said many kind things, and asked many questions; all of which I took very solemnly, like one who had been in the clouds and returned to earth with a sign upon

him. When Miss Dwight asked me to read my poem to the class on the day of celebration, I readily consented. It was not in me to refuse a chance to tell my schoolmates what I thought of George Washington.

I was not a heroic figure when I stood up in front of the class to pronounce the praises of the Father of his Country. Thin, pale, and hollow, with a shadow of short black curls on my brow, and the staring look of prominent eyes, I must have looked more frightened than imposing. My dress added no grace to my appearance. "Plaids" were in fashion, and my frock was of a red-and-green "plaid" that had a ghastly effect on my complexion. I hated it when I thought of it, but on the great day I did not know I had any dress on. Heels clapped together, and hands glued to my sides, I lifted up my voice in praise of George Washington. It was not much of a voice; like my hollow cheeks, it suggested consumption. My pronunciation was faulty, my declamation flat. But I had the courage of my convictions. I was face to face with twoscore Fellow Citizens, in clean blouses and extra frills. I must tell them what George Washington had done for their country — for *our* country — for me.

I can laugh now at the impossible metres, the grándiose phrases, the verbose repetitions of my poem. Years ago I must have laughed at it, when I threw my only copy into the wastebasket. The copy I am now turning over was loaned me by Miss Dwight, who faithfully preserved it all these years, for the sake, no doubt, of what I strove to express when I laboriously hitched together those dozen and more ungraceful stanzas. But to the forty Fellow Citizens sitting in rows in front of me it was no laughing matter. Even the bad boys sat in attitudes of attention, hypnotized by the solemnity of my demeanor. If they

got any inkling of what the hail of big words was about, it must have been through occult suggestion. I fixed their eighty eyes with my single stare, and gave it to them, stanza after stanza, with such emphasis as the lameness of the lines permitted.

> He whose courage, will, amazing bravery,
> Did free his land from a despot's rule,
> From man's greatest evil, almost slavery,
> And all that 's taught in tyranny's school,
> Who gave his land its liberty,
> Who was he?
>
> 'T was he who e'er will be our pride,
> Immortal Washington,
> Who always did in truth confide,
> We hail our Washington!

The best of the verses were no better than these, but the children listened. They had to. Presently I gave them news, declaring that Washington

> Wrote the famous Constitution; sacred 's the hand
> That this blessed guide to man had given, which says, "One
> And all of mankind are alike, excepting none."

This was received in respectful silence, possibly because the other Fellow Citizens were as hazy about historical facts as I at this point. "Hurrah for Washington!" they understood, and "Three cheers for the Red, White, and Blue!" was only to be expected on that occasion. But there ran a special note through my poem — a thought that only Israel Rubinstein or Beckie Aronovitch could have fully understood, besides myself. For I made myself the spokesman of the "luckless sons of Abraham," saying —

> Then we weary Hebrew children at last found rest
> In the land where reigned Freedom, and like a nest
> To homeless birds your land proved to us, and therefore
> Will we gratefully sing your praise evermore.

The boys and girls who had never been turned away from any door because of their father's religion sat as if fascinated in their places. But they woke up and applauded heartily when I was done, following the example of Miss Dwight, who wore the happy face which meant that one of her pupils had done well.

The recitation was repeated, by request, before several other classes, and the applause was equally prolonged at each repetition. After the exercises I was surrounded, praised, questioned, and made much of, by teachers as well as pupils. Plainly I had not poured my praise of George Washington into deaf ears. The teachers asked me if anybody had helped me with the poem. The girls invariably asked, "Mary Antin, how could you think of all those words?" None of them thought of the dictionary!

CHAPTER IX

IN NEWSPAPER ROW

If I had been satisfied with my poem in the first place, the applause with which it was received by my teachers and schoolmates convinced me that I had produced a very fine thing indeed. So the person, whoever it was, — perhaps my father — who suggested that my tribute to Washington ought to be printed, did not find me difficult to persuade. When I had achieved an absolutely perfect copy of my verses, at the expense of a dozen sheets of blue-ruled note paper, I crossed the Mystic River to Boston and boldly invaded Newspaper Row.

It never occurred to me to send my manuscript by mail. In fact, it has never been my way to send a delegate where I could go myself. Consciously or unconsciously, I have always acted on the motto of a wise man who was one of the dearest friends that Boston kept for me until I came. "Personal presence moves the world," said the great Dr. Hale; and I went in person to beard the editor in his armchair.

From the ferry slip to the offices of the *Boston Transcript* the way was long, strange, and full of perils; but I kept resolutely on up Hanover Street, being familiar with that part of my route, till I came to a puzzling corner. There I stopped, utterly bewildered by the tangle of streets, the roar of traffic, the giddy swarm of pedestrians. With the precious manuscript tightly clasped, I balanced myself on the curbstone, afraid to plunge into the boiling vortex of the crossing. Every time I made a start, a clanging street

car snatched up the way. I could not even pick out my street; the unobtrusive street signs were lost to my unpractised sight in the glaring confusion of store signs and advertisements. If I accosted a pedestrian to ask the way, I had to speak several times before I was heard. Jews, hurrying by with bearded chins on their bosoms and eyes intent, shrugged their shoulders at the name *Transcript*, and shrugged till they were out of sight. Italians sauntering behind their fruit carts answered my inquiry with a lift of the head that made their earrings gleam, and a wave of the hand that referred me to all four points of the compass at once. I was trying to catch the eye of the tall policeman who stood grandly in the middle of the crossing, a stout pillar around which the waves of traffic broke, when deliverance bellowed in my ear.

"*Herald, Globe, Record, Tra-avel-er!* Eh? Whatcher want, sis?" The tall newsboy had to stoop to me. "*Transcript?* Sure!" And in half a twinkling he had picked me out a paper from his bundle. When I explained to him, he good-naturedly tucked the paper in again, piloted me across, unravelled the end of Washington Street for me, and with much pointing out of landmarks, headed me for my destination, my nose seeking the spire of the Old South Church.

I found the *Transcript* building a waste of corridors tunnelled by a maze of staircases. On the glazed-glass doors were many signs with the names or nicknames of many persons: "City Editor"; "Beggars and Peddlers not Allowed." The nameless world not included in these categories was warned off, forbidden to be or do: "Private — No Admittance"; "Don't Knock." And the various inhospitable legends on the doors and walls were punctuated by frequent cuspidors on the floor. There was no sign anywhere of the

welcome which I, as an author, expected to find in the home of a newspaper.

I was descending from the top story to the street for the seventh time, trying to decide what kind of editor a patriotic poem belonged to, when an untidy boy carrying broad paper streamers and whistling shrilly, in defiance of an express prohibition on the wall, bustled through the corridor and left a door ajar. I slipped in behind him, and found myself in a room full of editors.

I was a little surprised at the appearance of the editors. I had imagined my editor would look like Mr. Jones, the principal of my school, whose coat was always buttoned, and whose finger nails were beautiful. These people were in shirt sleeves, and they smoked, and they didn't politely turn in their revolving chairs when I came in, and ask, "What can I do for you?"

The room was noisy with typewriters, and nobody heard my "Please, can you tell me." At last one of the machines stopped, and the operator thought he heard something in the pause. He looked up through his own smoke. I guess he thought he saw something, for he stared. It troubled me a little to have him stare so. I realized suddenly that the hand in which I carried my manuscript was moist, and I was afraid it would make marks on the paper. I held out the manuscript to the editor, explaining that it was a poem about George Washington, and would he please print it in the *Transcript*.

There was something queer about that particular editor. The way he stared and smiled made me feel about eleven inches high, and my voice kept growing smaller and smaller as I neared the end of my speech.

At last he spoke, laying down his pipe, and sitting back at his ease.

"So you have brought us a poem, my child?"

"It's about George Washington," I repeated impressively. "Don't you want to read it?"

"I should be delighted, my dear, but the fact is — "

He did not take my paper. He stood up and called across the room.

"Say, Jack! here is a young lady who has brought us a poem — about George Washington. — Wrote it yourself, my dear? — Wrote it all herself. What shall we do with her?"

Mr. Jack came over, and another man. My editor made me repeat my business, and they all looked interested, but nobody took my paper from me. They put their hands into their pockets, and my hand kept growing clammier all the time. The three seemed to be consulting, but I could not understand what they said, or why Mr. Jack laughed.

A fourth man, who had been writing busily at a desk near by, broke in on the consultation.

"That's enough, boys," he said, "that's enough. Take the young lady to Mr. Hurd."

Mr. Hurd, it was found, was away on a vacation, and of several other editors in several offices, to whom I was referred, none proved to be the proper editor to take charge of a poem about George Washington. At last an elderly editor suggested that as Mr. Hurd would be away for some time, I would do well to give up the *Transcript* and try the *Herald*, across the way.

A little tired by my wanderings, and bewildered by the complexity of the editorial system, but still confident about my mission, I picked my way across Washington Street and found the *Herald* offices. Here I had instant good luck. The first editor I addressed took my paper and invited me to a seat. He read my

poem much more quickly than I could myself, and said it was very nice, and asked me some questions, and made notes on a slip of paper which he pinned to my manuscript. He said he would have my piece printed very soon, and would send me a copy of the issue in which it appeared. As I was going, I could not help giving the editor my hand, although I had not experienced any handshaking in Newspaper Row. I felt that as author and editor we were on a very pleasant footing, and I gave him my hand in token of comradeship.

I had regained my full stature and something over, during this cordial interview, and when I stepped out into the street and saw the crowd intently studying the bulletin board I swelled out of all proportion. For I told myself that I, Mary Antin, was one of the inspired brotherhood who made newspapers so interesting. I did not know whether my poem would be put upon the bulletin board ; but at any rate, it would be in the paper, with my name at the bottom, like my story about "Snow" in Miss Dillingham's school journal. And all these people in the streets, and more, thousands of people — all Boston ! — would read my poem, and learn my name, and wonder who I was. I smiled to myself in delicious amusement when a man deliberately put me out of his path, as I dreamed my way through the jostling crowd ; if he only *knew* whom he was treating so unceremoniously !

When the paper with my poem in it arrived, the whole house pounced upon it at once. I was surprised to find that my verses were not all over the front page. The poem was a little hard to find, if anything, being tucked away in the middle of the voluminous sheet. But when we found it, it looked wonderful, just like real poetry, not at all as if somebody we knew had written it. It occupied a gratifying amount of space,

and was introduced by a flattering biographical sketch of the author — the *author!* — the material for which the friendly editor had artfully drawn from me during that happy interview. And my name, as I had prophesied, was at the bottom!

When the excitement in the house had subsided, my father took all the change out of the cash drawer and went to buy up the *Herald.* He did not count the pennies. He just bought *Heralds*, all he could lay his hands on, and distributed them gratis to all our friends, relatives, and acquaintances; to all who could read, and to some who could not. For weeks he carried a clipping from the *Herald* in his breast pocket, and few were the occasions when he did not manage to introduce it into the conversation. He treasured that clipping as for years he had treasured the letters I wrote him from Polotzk.

Although my father bought up most of the issue containing my poem, a few hundred copies were left to circulate among the general public, enough to spread the flame of my patriotic ardor and to enkindle a thousand sluggish hearts. Really, there was something more solemn than vanity in my satisfaction. Pleased as I was with my notoriety — and nobody but I knew how exceedingly pleased — I had a sober feeling about it all. I enjoyed being praised and admired and envied; but what gave a divine flavor to my happiness was the idea that I had publicly borne testimony to the goodness of my exalted hero, to the greatness of my adopted country. I did not discount the homage of Arlington Street, because I did not properly rate the intelligence of its population. I took the admiration of my schoolmates without a grain of salt; it was just so much honey to me. I could not know that what made me great in the eyes of my neighbors was that "there was a piece about me in the paper";

it mattered very little to them what the "piece" was about. I thought they really admired my sentiments. On the street, in the schoolyard, I was pointed out. The people said, "That 's Mary Antin. She had her name in the paper." *I* thought they said, "This is she who loves her country and worships George Washington."

To repeat, I was well aware that I was something of a celebrity, and took all possible satisfaction in the fact; yet I gave my schoolmates no occasion to call me "stuck-up." My vanity did not express itself in strutting or wagging the head. I played tag and puss-in-the-corner in the schoolyard, and did everything that was comrade-like. But in the schoolroom I conducted myself gravely, as befitted one who was preparing for the noble career of a poet.

When my teacher had visitors I was aware that I was the show pupil of the class. I was always made to recite, my compositions were passed around, and often I was called up on the platform — oh, climax of exaltation! — to be interviewed by the distinguished strangers; while the class took advantage of the teacher's distraction, to hold forbidden intercourse on matters not prescribed in the curriculum. When I returned to my seat, after such public audience with the great, I looked to see if Lizzie McDee, who was my closest rival, was taking notice; and Lizzie, who was a generous soul, generally smiled, and I was satisfied.

Not but what I paid a price for my honors. With all my self-possession I had a certain capacity for shyness. Even when I arose to recite before the customary audience of my class I suffered from incipient stage fright, and my voice trembled over the first few words. When visitors were in the room I was even more troubled; and when I was made the special ob-

ject of their attention my triumph was marred by acute distress. If I was called up to speak to the visitors, forty pairs of eyes pricked me in the back as I went. I stumbled in the aisle, and knocked down things that were not at all in my way; and my awkwardness increasing my embarrassment, I would gladly have changed places with Lizzie or the bad boy in the back row; anything, only to be less conspicuous. When I found myself shaking hands with an august School-Committeeman, or a teacher from New York, the remnants of my self-possession vanished in awe; and it was in a very husky voice that I repeated, as I was asked, my name, lineage, and personal history. On the whole, I do not think that the School-Committeeman found a very forward creature in the solemn-faced little girl with the tight curls and the terrible red-and-green "plaid."

These awful audiences did not always end with the handshaking. Sometimes the great personages asked me to write to them, and exchanged addresses with me. Some of these correspondences continued through years, and were the source of much pleasure, on one side at least. And Arlington Street took notice when I received letters with important-looking or aristocratic-looking letterheads. Lizzie McDee also took notice. *I* saw to that.

CHAPTER X

A NUMBER OF THINGS

My sister and I continued to have part of our life in common for some time after she went to work. We formed ourselves into an evening school, she and I and the two youngsters, for the study of English and arithmetic. As soon as the supper dishes were put away, we gathered around the kitchen table, with books borrowed from school, and pencils supplied by my father with eager willingness. I was the teacher, the others the diligent pupils; and the earnestness with which we labored was worthy of the great things we meant to achieve. Whether the results were commensurate with our efforts I cannot say. I only know that Frieda's cheeks flamed with the excitement of reading English monosyllables; and her eyes shone like stars on a moonless night when I explained to her how she and I and George Washington were Fellow Citizens together.

Inspired by our studious evenings, what Frieda Antin would not be glad to sit all day bent over the needle, that the family should keep on its feet, and Mary continue at school? The morning ride on the ferryboat, when spring winds dimpled the river, may have stirred her heart with nameless longings, but when she took her place at the machine her lot was glorified to her, and she wanted to sing; for the girls, the foreman, the boss, all talked about Mary Antin, whose poems were printed in an American newspaper. Wherever she went on her humble business, she was sure to hear her sister's name. For, with character-

istic loyalty, the whole Jewish community claimed kinship with me, simply because I was a Jew; and they made much of my small triumphs, and pointed to me with pride, just as they always do when a Jew distinguishes himself in any worthy way. Frieda, going home from work at sunset, when rosy buds beaded the shining stems, may have felt the weariness of those who toil for bread; but when we opened our books after supper, her spirit revived afresh, and it was only when the lamp began to smoke that she thought of taking rest.

At bedtime she and I chatted as we used to do when we were little girls in Polotzk; only now, instead of closing our eyes to see imaginary wonders, according to a bedtime game of ours, we exchanged anecdotes about the marvellous adventures of our American life. My contributions on these occasions were boastful accounts, I have no doubt, of what I did at school, and in the company of school-committee men, editors, and other notables; and Frieda's delight in my achievements was the very flower of her fine sympathy. As formerly, when I had been naughty and I invited her to share in my repentance, she used to join me in spiritual humility and solemnly dedicate herself to a better life; so now, when I was full of pride and ambition, she, too, felt the crown on her brows, and heard the applause of future generations murmuring in her ear. And so partaking of her sister's glory, what Frieda Antin would not say that her portion was sufficient reward for a youth of toil?

I did not, like my sister, earn my bread in those days; but let us say that I earned my salt, by sweeping, scrubbing, and scouring, on Saturdays, when there was no school. My mother's housekeeping was necessarily irregular, as she was pretty constantly occupied in the store; so there was enough for us children

to do to keep the bare rooms shining. Even here Frieda did the lion's share; it used to take me all Saturday to accomplish what Frieda would do with half a dozen turns of her capable hands. I did not like housework, but I loved order; so I polished windows with a will, and even got some fun out of scrubbing, by laying out the floor in patterns and tracing them all around the room in a lively flurry of soapsuds.

There is a joy that comes from doing common things well, especially if they seem hard to us. When I faced a day's housework I was half paralyzed with a sense of inability, and I wasted precious minutes walking around it, to see what a very hard task I had. But having pitched in and conquered, it gave me an exquisite pleasure to survey my work. My hair tousled and my dress tucked up, streaked arms bare to the elbow, I would step on my heels over the damp, clean boards, and pass my hand over chair rounds and table legs, to prove that no dust was left. I could not wait to put my dress in order before running out into the street to see how my windows shone. While it never got so that I looked forward to cleaning day, my dislike for Saturday gradually wore off, as I tasted, again and again, the delight of achievement in the field of broom and brush and stove polish.

The stretch of weeks from June to September, when the schools were closed, would have been hard to fill in had it not been for the public library. At first I made myself a calendar of the vacation months, and every morning I tore off a day, and comforted myself with the decreasing number of vacation days. But after I discovered the public library I was not impatient for the reopening of school. The library did not open till one o'clock in the afternoon, and each reader was allowed to take out only one book

at a time. Long before one o'clock I was to be seen on the library steps, waiting for the door of paradise to open. I spent hours in the reading-room, pleased with the atmosphere of books, with the order and quiet of the place, so unlike anything on Arlington Street. The sense of these things permeated my consciousness even when I was absorbed in a book, just as the rustle of pages turned and the tiptoe tread of the librarian reached my ear, without distracting my attention. Anything so wonderful as a library had never been in my life. It was even better than school in some ways. One could read and read, and learn and learn, as fast as one knew how, without being obliged to stop for stupid little girls and inattentive little boys to catch up with the lesson. When I went home from the library I had a book under my arm; and I would finish it before the library opened next day, no matter till what hours of the night I burned my little lamp.

What books did I read so diligently? Pretty nearly everything that came to my hand. I dare say the librarian helped me select my books, but, curiously enough, I do not remember. Something must have directed me, for I read a great many of the books that are written for children. Of these I remember with the greatest delight Louisa Alcott's stories. Next to Miss Alcott's books in my esteem were boys' books of adventure, many of them by Horatio Alger; and I read all, I suppose, of the Rollo books, by Jacob Abbott.

But that was not all. I read every kind of printed matter that came into the house, by design or accident. If a bundle came into the house wrapped in a stained old newspaper, I laboriously smoothed out the paper and read it through. I enjoyed it all, and found fault with nothing that I read. For in the beginning my

appetite for print was so enormous that I could let nothing pass through my hands unread, while my taste was so crude that nothing printed could offend me.

Good reading matter came into the house from one other source besides the library. The Yiddish newspapers of the day were excellent, and my father subscribed to the best of them.

There was one book in the library over which I pored very often, and that was the enclyclopædia. I turned usually to the names of famous people, beginning, of course, with George Washington. Oftenest of all I read the biographical sketches of my favorite authors, and felt that the worthies must have been glad to die just to have their names and histories printed out in the book of fame. It seemed to me the apotheosis of glory to be even briefly mentioned in an encyclopædia. And there grew in me an enormous ambition that devoured all my other ambitions, which was no less than this: that I should live to know that after my death my name would surely be printed in the encyclopædia. It was such a prodigious thing to expect that I kept the idea a secret even from myself, just letting it lie where it sprouted, in an unexplored corner of my busy brain. But it grew on me in spite of myself, till finally I could not resist the temptation to study out the exact place in the encyclopædia where my name would belong. I saw that it would come not far from "Alcott, Louisa M."; and I covered my face with my hands, to hide the silly, baseless joy in it. I practised saying my name in the encyclopædic form, "Antin, Mary"; and I realized that it sounded chopped off, and wondered if I might not annex a middle initial. I wanted to ask my teacher about it, but I was afraid I might betray my reasons. For, infatuated though I was with the idea of the greatness I might live to attain, I knew very well that

thus far my claims to posthumous fame were ridiculously unfounded, and I did not want to be laughed at for my vanity.

Summer days are long, and the evenings, we know, are as long as the lamp-wick. So, with all my reading, I had time to play; and, with all my studiousness, I had the will to play. My favorite playmates were boys. It was but mild fun to play theatre in Bessie Finklestein's back yard, even if I had leading parts, which I made impressive by recitations in Russian, no word of which was intelligible to my audience. It was far better sport to play hide-and-seek with the boys, for I enjoyed the use of my limbs — what there was of them. I was so often reproached and teased for being little that it gave me great satisfaction to beat a five-foot boy to the goal.

Once a great, hulky colored boy, who was the torment of the neighborhood, treated me roughly while I was playing on the street. My father, determined to teach the rascal a lesson for once, had him arrested and brought to court. The boy was locked up overnight, and he emerged from his brief imprisonment with a respect for the rights and persons of his neighbors. But the moral of this incident lies not herein. What interested me more than my revenge on a bully was what I saw of the way in which justice was actually administered in the United States. Here we were gathered in the little courtroom, bearded Arlington Street against wool-headed Arlington Street; accused and accuser, witnesses, sympathizers, sight-seers, and all. Nobody cringed, nobody was bullied, nobody lied who did n't want to. We were all free, and all treated equally, just as it said in the Constitution! The evil-doer was actually punished, and not the victim, as might very easily happen in a similar case in Russia.

"Liberty and justice for all." Three cheers for the Red, White, and Blue!

There was one occasion in the week when I was ever willing to put away my book, no matter how entrancing were its pages. That was on Saturday night, when Bessie Finklestein called for me; and Bessie and I, with arms entwined, called for Sadie Rabinowitch; and Bessie and Sadie and I, still further entwined, called for Annie Reilly; and Bessie, etc., etc., inextricably wound up, marched up Broadway, and took possession of all we saw, heard, guessed, or desired, from end to end of that main thoroughfare of Chelsea.

Parading all abreast, as many as we were, only breaking ranks to let people pass; leaving the imprints of our noses and fingers on plate-glass windows ablaze with electric lights and alluring with display; inspecting tons of cheap candy, to find a few pennies' worth of the most enduring kind, the same to be sucked and chewed by the company, turn and turn about, as we continued our promenade; loitering wherever a crowd gathered, or running for a block or so to cheer on the fire-engine or police ambulance; getting into everybody's way, and just keeping clear of serious mischief, — we were only girls, — we enjoyed ourselves as only children can whose fathers keep a basement grocery store, whose mothers do their own washing, and whose sisters operate a machine for five dollars a week.

So went the life in Chelsea for the space of a year or so. Then my father, finding a discrepancy between his assets and liabilities on the wrong side of the ledger, once more struck tent, collected his flock, and set out in search of richer pastures.

There was a charming simplicity about these proceedings. Here to-day, apparently rooted; there to-morrow, and just as much at home. Another basement

grocery, with a freshly painted sign over the door; the broom in the corner, the loaf on the table — these things made home for us. There were rather more Negroes on Wheeler Street, in the lower South End of Boston, than there had been on Arlington Street, which promised more numerous outstanding accounts; but they were a neighborly folk, and they took us strangers in — sometimes very badly. Then there was the school three blocks away, where "America" was sung to the same tune as in Chelsea, and geography was made as dark a mystery. It was impossible not to feel at home.

And presently, lest anything be lacking to our domestic bliss, there was a new baby in a borrowed crib; and little Dora had only a few more turns to take with her battered doll carriage before a life-size vehicle with a more animated dolly was turned over to her constant care.

The Wheeler Street neighborhood is not a place where careful parents would choose to bring up their children, if pleasanter localities were within their reach. But I found no fault with Wheeler Street when I was fourteen years old. On the contrary, I pronounced it good. We had never lived so near the car tracks before, and I delighted in the moonlike splendor of the arc lamp just in front of the saloon. The space illumined by this lamp and enlivened by the passage of many people was the favorite playground for Wheeler Street youth. On our street there was not room to turn around; here the sidewalk spread out wider as it swung around to Shawmut Avenue.

I played with the boys by preference, as in Chelsea. Whatever pranks the boys proposed, they found me game; and they proposed a great many things, and play hours were never long enough.

And there was Morgan Chapel. It was worth com-

ing to Wheeler Street just for that. All the children of the neighborhood, except the most rowdyish, flocked to Morgan Chapel at least once a week. This was on Saturday evening, when a free entertainment was given, consisting of music, recitations, and other parlor accomplishments. The performances were exceedingly artistic, according to the impartial judgment of juvenile Wheeler Street. I can speak with authority for the crowd of us from Number 11. We hung upon the lips of the beautiful ladies who read or sang to us; and they in turn did their best, recognizing the quality of our approval. We admired the miraculously clean gentlemen who sang or played, as heartily as we applauded their performance. Sometimes the beautiful ladies were accompanied by ravishing little girls who stood up in a glory of golden curls, frilled petticoats, and silk stockings, to recite pathetic or comic pieces, with trained expression and practised gestures that seemed to us the perfection of the elocutionary art. We were all a little bit stage-struck after these entertainments; but what was more, we were genuinely moved by the glimpses of a fairer world than ours which we caught through the music and poetry; the world in which the beautiful ladies dwelt with the fairy children and the clean gentlemen.

Morgan Chapel was not the only institution in the neighborhood that offered amusement and inspiration to the people of the crowded tenements. There were the missions, the libraries, the neighborhood centres, where clubs and classes invited us to do all sorts of delightful things for which our homes afforded no resources. My brother, my sister Dora, and I were introduced to some of the clubs by our young neighbors, and we were glad to go. For our home gave us little besides meals in the kitchen and beds in the dark. What with the six of us, and the store, and

the baby, and sometimes a "greener" or two from Polotzk, whom we lodged as a matter of course till they found a permanent home — what with such a company and the size of our tenement, we needed to get out almost as much as our neighbors' children. I say almost; for our parlor we managed to keep pretty clear, and the lamp on our centre table was always in order, and its light fell often on an open book. Still, it was part of the life of Wheeler Street to belong to clubs, so we belonged.

I did n't care for sewing or cooking, so I joined a dancing-club; and even here I was a failure. I had been a very good dancer in Russia, but here I found all the steps different, and I did not have the courage to go out in the middle of the slippery floor and mince it and toe it in front of the teacher. When I retired to a corner and tried to play dominoes, I became suddenly shy of my partner; and I never could win a game of checkers, although formerly I used to beat my father at it. I tried to be friends with a little girl I had known in Chelsea, but she met my advances coldly. She lived on Appleton Street, which was too aristocratic to mix with Wheeler Street. Geraldine was studying elocution, and she wore a scarlet cape and hood, and she was going on the stage by and by. I acknowledged that her sense of superiority was well-founded, and retired farther into my corner, for the first time conscious of my shabbiness and lowliness.

I looked on at the dancing until I could endure it no longer. Overcome by a sense of isolation and unfitness, I slipped out of the room, avoiding the teacher's eye, and went home to write melancholy poetry.

I shall never forget the pattern of the red carpet in our parlor, — we had achieved a carpet since Chelsea days, — because I lay for hours face down on the floor, writing poetry on a screechy slate. When I had per

fected my verses, and copied them fair on the famous blue-lined note paper, and saw that I had made a very pathetic poem indeed, I felt better. And this happened over and over again. I gave up the dancing-club, I ceased to know the rowdy little boys, and I wrote melancholy poetry oftener, and felt better. The centre table became my study. I read much, and mooned between chapters, and wrote long letters to Miss Dillingham.

CHAPTER XI

TARNISHED LAURELS

THROUGH all these small adventures on Wheeler Street I was slowly growing up, but for many a day more I was still a little girl. As a little girl, in many ways immature for my age, I finished my course in the grammar school, and was graduated with honors, four years after my landing in Boston.

Wheeler Street recognizes five great events in a girl's life: namely, christening, confirmation, graduation, marriage, and burial. These occasions all require full dress for the heroine, and full dress is forthcoming, no matter if the family goes into debt for it. There was not a girl who came to school in rags all the year round that did not burst forth in sudden glory on Graduation Day. Fine muslin frocks, lace-trimmed petticoats, patent-leather shoes, perishable hats, gloves, parasols, fans — every girl had them. A mother who had scrubbed floors for years to keep her girl in school was not going to have her shamed in the end for want of a pretty dress. So she cut off the children's supply of butter and worked nights and borrowed and fell into arrears with the rent; and on Graduation Day she felt magnificently rewarded, seeing her Mamie as fine as any girl in the school. And in order to preserve for posterity this triumphant spectacle, she took Mamie, after the exercises, to be photographed, with her diploma in one hand, a bouquet in the other, and the gloves, fan, parasol, and patent-leather shoes in full sight around a fancy table.

Poor as we were, it did not strike me as folly, but as the fulfilment of the portent of my natal star, when I saw myself, on Graduation Day, arrayed like unto a princess. Frills, lace, patent-leather shoes — I had everything. I even had a sash with silk fringes.

Before we had been two years in America, my sister Frieda was engaged to be married. This was under the old dispensation: Frieda came to America too late to avail herself of the gifts of an American girlhood. My father was too recently from the Old World to be entirely free from the influence of its social traditions. He had put Frieda to work out of necessity. The necessity was hardly lifted when she had an offer of marriage, but my father would not stand in the way of what he considered her welfare. Let her escape from the workshop, if she had a chance, while the roses were still in her cheeks. If she remained for ten years more bent over the needle, what would she gain? Not even her personal comfort; for Frieda never called her earnings her own, but spent everything on the family, denying herself all but necessities. The young man who sued for her was a good workman, earning fair wages, of irreproachable character, and refined manners. My father had known him for years.

My sister's engagement pleased me very well. Our confidences were not interrupted, and I understood that she was happy. I was very fond of Moses Rifkin myself. He was the nicest young man of my acquaintance, not at all like other workmen. He was very kind to us children, bringing us presents and taking us out for excursions. He had a sense of humor, and he was going to marry our Frieda. How could I help being pleased?

The marriage was not to take place for some time, and in the interval Frieda remained in the shop. She continued to bring home all her wages. If she was

going to desert the family, she would not let them feel it sooner than she must.

Then all of a sudden she turned spendthrift. She appropriated I do not know what fabulous sums, to spend just as she pleased, for once. She attended bargain sales, and brought away such finery as had never graced our flat before. Home from work in the evening, after a hurried supper, she shut herself up in the parlor, and cut and snipped and measured and basted and stitched as if there were nothing else in the world to do. It was early summer, and the air had a wooing touch, even on Wheeler Street. Moses Rifkin came, and I suppose he also had a wooing touch. But Frieda only smiled and shook her head; and as her mouth was full of pins, it was physically impossible for Moses to argue. She remained all evening in a white disorder of tucked breadths, curled ruffles, dismembered sleeves, and swirls of fresh lace; her needle glancing in the lamplight, and poor Moses picking up her spools.

Her trousseau, was it not? No, not her trousseau. It was my graduation dress on which she was so intent. And when it was finished, and was pronounced a most beautiful dress, and she ought to have been satisfied, Frieda went to the shops once more and bought the sash with the silk fringes.

Graduation Day was nothing less than a triumph for me. It was not only that I had two pieces to speak, one of them an original composition; it was more because I was known in my school district as the "smartest" girl in the class, and all eyes were turned on the prodigy, and I was aware of it. I was aware of everything. That is why I am able to tell you everything now.

The assembly hall was crowded to bursting, but my friends had no trouble in finding seats. They were

ushered up to the platform, which was reserved for guests of honor. I was very proud to see my friends treated with such distinction. My parents were there, and Frieda, of course; Miss Dillingham, and some others of my Chelsea teachers. A dozen or so of my humbler friends and acquaintances were scattered among the crowd on the floor.

When I stepped up on the stage to read my composition I was seized with stage fright. The floor under my feet and the air around me were oppressively present to my senses, while my own hand I could not have located. I did not know where my body began or ended, I was so conscious of my gloves, my shoes, my flowing sash. My wonderful dress, in which I had taken so much satisfaction, gave me the most trouble. I was suddenly paralyzed by a conviction that it was too short, and it seemed to me I stood on absurdly long legs. And ten thousand people were looking up at me. It was horrible!

I suppose I no more than cleared my throat before I began to read, but to me it seemed that I stood petrified for an age, an awful silence booming in my ears. My voice, when at last I began, sounded far away. I thought that nobody could hear me. But I kept on, mechanically; for I had rehearsed many times. And as I read I gradually forgot myself, forgot the place and the occasion. The people looking up at me heard the story of a beautiful little boy, my cousin, whom I had loved very dearly, and who died in far-distant Russia some years after I came to America. My composition was not a masterpiece; it was merely good for a girl of fifteen. But I had written that I still loved the little cousin, and I made a thousand strangers feel it. And before the applause there was a moment of stillness in the great hall.

After the singing and reading by the class, there

were the customary addresses by distinguished guests. We girls were reminded that we were going to be women, and happiness was promised to those of us who would aim to be noble women. A great many trite and obvious things, a great deal of the rhetoric appropriate to the occasion, compliments, applause, general satisfaction; so went the programme. Much of the rhetoric, many of the fine sentiments did not penetrate to the thoughts of us for whom they were intended, because we were in such a flutter about our ruffles and ribbons, and could hardly refrain from openly prinking. But we applauded very heartily every speaker and every would-be speaker, understanding that by a consensus of opinion on the platform we were very fine young ladies, and much was to be expected of us.

One of the last speakers was introduced as a member of the School Board. He began like all the rest of them, but he ended differently. Abandoning generalities, he went on to tell the story of a particular schoolgirl, a pupil in a Boston school, whose phenomenal career might serve as an illustration of what the American system of free education and the European immigrant could make of each other. He had not got very far when I realized, to my great surprise and no small delight, that he was telling my story. I saw my friends on the platform beaming behind the speaker, and I heard my name whispered in the audience. I had been so much of a celebrity, in a small local way, that identification of the speaker's heroine was inevitable. My classmates, of course, guessed the name, and they turned to look at me, and nudged me, and all but pointed at me; their new muslins rustling and silk ribbons hissing.

One or two nearest me forgot etiquette so far as to whisper to me. "Mary Antin," they said, as the speaker

sat down, amid a burst of the most enthusiastic applause, — "Mary Antin, why don't you get up and thank him?"

I was dazed with all that had happened. Bursting with pride I was, but I was moved, too, by nobler feelings. I realized, in a vague, far-off way, what it meant to my father and mother to be sitting there and seeing me held up as a paragon, my history made the theme of an eloquent discourse; what it meant to my father to see his ambitious hopes thus gloriously fulfilled, his judgment of me verified; what it meant to Frieda to hear me all but named with such honor. With all these things choking my heart to overflowing, my wits forsook me, if I had had any at all that day. The audience was stirring and whispering so that I could hear: "Who is it?" "Is that so?" And again they prompted me: —

"Mary Antin, get up. Get up and thank him, Mary."

And I rose where I sat, and in a voice that sounded thin as a fly's after the oratorical bass of the last speaker, I began: —

"I want to thank you — "

That is as far as I got. Mr. Swan, the principal, waved his hand to silence me; and then, and only then, did I realize the enormity of what I had done.

My eulogist had had the good taste not to mention names, and I had been brazenly forward, deliberately calling attention to myself when there was no need. Oh, it was sickening! I hated myself, I hated with all my heart the girls who had prompted me to such immodest conduct. I wished the ground would yawn and snap me up. I was ashamed to look up at my friends on the platform. What was Miss Dillingham thinking of me? Oh, what a fool I had been! I had ruined my own triumph. I had disgraced myself, and my friends,

and poor Mr. Swan, and the Winthrop School. The monster vanity had sucked out my wits, and left me a staring idiot.

It is easy to say that I was making a mountain out of a mole hill, a catastrophe out of a mere breach of good manners. It is easy to say that. But I know that I suffered agonies of shame. After the exercises, when the crowd pressed in all directions in search of friends, I tried in vain to get out of the hall. I was mobbed, I was lionized. Everybody wanted to shake hands with the prodigy of the day, and they knew who it was. I had made sure of that; I had exhibited myself. The people smiled on me, flattered me, passed me on from one to another. I smirked back, but I did not know what I said. I was wild to be clear of the building. I thought everybody mocked me. All my roses had turned to ashes, and all through my own brazen conduct.

I would have given my diploma to have Miss Dillingham know how the thing had happened, but I could not bring myself to speak first. If she would ask me — But nobody asked. Nobody looked away from me. Everybody congratulated me, and my father and mother and my remotest relations. But the sting of shame smarted just the same; I could not be consoled. I had made a fool of myself: Mr. Swan had publicly put me down.

Ah, so that was it! Vanity was the vital spot again. It was wounded vanity that writhed and squirmed. It was not because I had been bold, but because I had been pronounced bold, that I suffered so monstrously. If Mr. Swan, with an eloquent gesture, had not silenced me, I might have made my little speech — good heavens! what *did* I mean to say? — and probably called it another feather in my bonnet. But he had stopped me promptly, disgusted with my forward-

ness, and he had shown before all those hundreds what he thought of me. Therein lay the sting.

With all my talent for self-analysis, it took me a long time to realize the essential pettiness of my trouble. For years — actually for years — after that eventful day of mingled triumph and disgrace, I could not think of the unhappy incident without inward squirming. I remember distinctly how the little scene would suddenly flash upon me at night, as I lay awake in bed, and I would turn over impatiently, as if to shake off a nightmare; and this so long after the occurrence that I was myself amazed at the persistence of the nightmare. I had never been reproached by any one for my conduct on Graduation Day. Why could I not forgive myself? I studied the matter deeply — it wearies me to remember how deeply — till at last I understood that it was wounded vanity that hurt so, and no nobler remorse. Then, and only then, was the ghost laid. If it ever tried to get up again, after that, I only had to call it names to see it scurry back to its grave and pull the sod down after it.

CHAPTER XII

DOVER STREET

WHAT happened next was Dover Street.

And what was Dover Street?

Outwardly, Dover Street is a noisy thoroughfare cut through a South End slum, in every essential the same as Wheeler Street. It is intersected, near its eastern end, where we lived, by Harrison Avenue. That street is to the South End what Salem Street is to the North End. It is the heart of the South End ghetto, for the greater part of its length; although its northern end belongs to the realm of Chinatown. Its multifarious business bursts through the narrow shop doors, and overruns the basements, the sidewalk, the street itself, in pushcarts and open-air stands. Its multitudinous population bursts through the greasy tenement doors, and floods the corridors, the door-steps, the gutters, the side streets, pushing in and out among the pushcarts, all day long and half the night besides.

We had no particular reason for coming to Dover Street. It might just as well have been Applepie Alley. For my father had sold, with the goods, fixtures, and good-will of the Wheeler Street store, all his hopes of ever making a living in the grocery trade; and I doubt if he got a silver dollar the more for them. We had to live somewhere, even if we were not making a living, so we came to Dover Street, where tenements were cheap.

Our new home consisted of five small rooms up two flights of stairs, with the right of way through the

dark corridors. In the "parlor" the dingy paper hung in rags and the plaster fell in chunks. One of the bedrooms was absolutely dark and air-tight. The kitchen windows looked out on a dirty court, at the back of which was the rear tenement of the estate. To us belonged, along with the five rooms and the right of way aforesaid, a block of upper space the length of a pulley line across this court, and the width of an arc described by a windy Monday's wash in its remotest wanderings.

The little front bedroom was assigned to me, with only one partner, my sister Dora. A mouse could not have led a cat much of a chase across this room; still we found space for a narrow bed, a crazy bureau, and a small table. From the window there was an unobstructed view of a lumberyard, beyond which frowned the blackened walls of a factory. The fence of the lumberyard was gay with theatre posters and illustrated advertisements of tobacco, whiskey, and patent baby foods. When the window was open, there was a constant clang and whirr of electric cars, varied by the screech of machinery, the clatter of empty wagons, or the rumble of heavy trucks.

There was nothing worse in all this than we had had before since our exile from Crescent Beach; but I did not take the same delight in the propinquity of electric cars and arc lights that I had till now. I suppose the tenement began to pall on me.

It must not be supposed that I enjoyed any degree of privacy because I had half a room to myself. We were six in the five rooms; we were bound to be always in each other's way. And as it was within our flat, so it was in the house as a whole. All doors, beginning with the street door, stood open most of the time; or if they were closed, the tenants did not wear out their knuckles knocking for admittance. I could

stand at any time in the unswept entrance hall and tell, from an analysis of the medley of sounds and smells that issued from doors ajar, what was going on in the several flats above and below. Sounds of scoldings, spankings, and quarrellings, smells of neglected babies and greasy cooking — the thick air was clamorous with advertisements of the wretchedness of family life in the tenements.

To escape from these various horrors I ascend to the roof, where bacon and babies and child-beating are not. But there I find two figures in calico wrappers, with bare red arms akimbo, a basket of wet clothes in front of each, and only one empty clothesline between them. I do not want to be dragged in as a witness in a case of assault and battery, so I descend to the street again.

In front of the door I squeeze through a group of children. They are going to play tag, and are counting to see who should be "it":—

"My-mother-and-your-mother-went-out-to-hang-clothes;
My-mother-gave-your-mother-a-punch-in-the-nose."

If the children's couplet does not give a vivid picture of the life, manners, and customs of Dover Street, no description of mine can ever do so.

Frieda was married before we came to Dover Street, and went to live in East Boston. This left me the eldest of the children at home. Whether on this account, or because I was outgrowing my childish carelessness, or because I began to believe, on the cumulative evidence of the Crescent Beach, Chelsea, and Wheeler Street adventures, that America, after all, was not going to provide for my father's family, — whether for any or all of these reasons, I began at this time to take bread-and-butter matters more to heart, and to ponder ways and means of getting rich. My father sought employment wherever work was

going on. His health was poor; he aged very fast. Nevertheless he offered himself for every kind of labor; he offered himself for a boy's wages. Here he was found too weak, here too old; here his imperfect English was in the way, here his Jewish appearance. He had a few short terms of work at this or that; I do not know the name of the form of drudgery that my father did not practise. But all told, he did not earn enough to pay the rent in full and buy a bone for the soup. The only steady source of income, for I do not know what years, was my brother's earnings from his newspapers.

Surely this was the time for me to take my sister's place in the workshop. I had had every fair chance until now: school, my time to myself, liberty to run and play and make friends. I had graduated from grammar school; I was of legal age to go to work. What was I doing, sitting at home and dreaming?

I was minding my business, of course; with all my might I was minding my business. As I understood it, my business was to go to school, to learn everything there was to know, to write poetry, become famous, and make the family rich. Surely it was not shirking to lay out such a programme for myself. I had boundless faith in my future. I was certainly going to be a great poet; I was certainly going to take care of the family.

Thus mused I, in my arrogance. And my family? They were as bad as I. My father had not lost a whit of his ambition for me. Since Graduation Day, and the school-committeeman's speech, and half a column about me in the paper, his ambition had soared even higher. He was going to keep me at school till I was prepared for college. By that time, he was sure, I would more than take care of myself. It never for a moment entered his head to doubt the wisdom or jus-

tice of this course. And my mother was just as loyal to my cause, and my brother, and my sister.

It is no wonder if I got along rapidly: I was helped, encouraged, and upheld by every one. Even the baby cheered me on. When I asked her whether she believed in higher education, she answered, without a moment's hesitation, "Ducka-ducka-da!" Against her I remember only that one day, when I read her a verse out of a most pathetic piece I was composing, she laughed right out, a most disrespectful laugh; for which I revenged myself by washing her face at the faucet, and rubbing it red on the roller towel.

It was just like me, when it was debated whether I would be best fitted for college at the High or the Latin School, to go in person to Mr. Tetlow, who was principal of both schools, and so get the most expert opinion on the subject. I never send a messenger, you may remember, where I can go myself. It was vacation time, and I had to find Mr. Tetlow at his home. Away out to the wilds of Roxbury I found my way — perhaps half an hour's ride on the electric car from Dover Street. I grew an inch taller and broader between the corner of Cedar Street and Mr. Tetlow's house, such was the charm of the clean, green suburb on a cramped waif from the slums. My faded calico dress, my rusty straw sailor hat, the color of my skin and all bespoke the waif. But never a bit daunted was I. I went up the steps to the porch, rang the bell, and asked for the great man with as much assurance as if I were a daily visitor on Cedar Street. I calmly awaited the appearance of Mr. Tetlow in the reception room, and stated my errand without trepidation.

And why not? I was a solemn little person for the moment, earnestly seeking advice on a matter of

great importance. That is what Mr. Tetlow saw, to judge by the gravity with which he discussed my business with me, and the courtesy with which he showed me to the door. He saw, too, I fancy, that I was not the least bit conscious of my shabby dress; and I am sure he did not smile at my appearance, even when my back was turned.

A new life began for me when I entered the Latin School in September. Until then I had gone to school with my equals, and as a matter of course. Now it was distinctly a feat for me to keep in school, and my schoolmates were socially so far superior to me that my poverty became conspicuous. The pupils of the Latin School, from the nature of the institution, are an aristocratic set. They come from refined homes, dress well, and spend the recess hour talking about parties, beaux, and the matinée. As students they are either very quick or very hard-working; for the course of study, in the lingo of the school world, is considered "stiff." The girl with half her brain asleep, or with too many beaux, drops out by the end of the first year; or a one and only beau may be the fatal element. At the end of the course the weeding process has reduced the once numerous tribe of academic candidates to a cosey little family.

By all these tokens I should have had serious business on my hands as a pupil in the Latin School, but I did not find it hard. To make myself letter-perfect in my lessons required long hours of study, but that was my delight. To make myself at home in an alien world was also within my talents; I had been practising it day and night for the past four years. To remain unconscious of my shabby and ill-fitting clothes when the rustle of silk petticoats in the schoolroom protested against them was a matter still within my moral reach. Half a dress a year had been my al-

lowance for many seasons; even less, for as I did not grow much I could wear my dresses as long as they lasted. And I had stood before editors, and exchanged polite calls with school-teachers, untroubled by the detestable colors and archaic design of my garments. To stand up and recite Latin declensions without trembling from hunger was something more of a feat, because I sometimes went to school with little or no breakfast; but even that required no special heroism, — at most it was a matter of self-control. I had the advantage of a poor appetite, too; I really did not need much breakfast. Or if I was hungry it would hardly show; I coughed so much that my unsteadiness was self-explained.

I was not unhappy on Dover Street; quite the contrary. Everything of consequence was well with me. Poverty was a superficial temporary matter; it vanished at the touch of money. Money in America was plentiful; it was only a matter of getting some of it, and I was on my way to the mint. If Dover Street was not a pleasant place to abide in, it was only a wayside house. And I was really happy, actively happy, in the exercise of my mind in Latin, mathematics, history, and the rest; the things that suffice a studious girl in the middle teens.

Still I had moments of depression, when my whole being protested against the life of the slum. All sorts of vulgar things forced themselves on my notice. Then it was I took to running away from home. I went out in the twilight and walked for hours, my blind feet leading me. I did not care where I went. If I lost my way, so much the better; I never wanted to see Dover Street again.

But behold, as I left the crowds behind, and the broader avenues were spanned by the open sky, my grievances melted away, and I fell to dreaming of

things that neither hurt nor pleased. A fringe of trees against the sunset became suddenly the symbol of the whole world, and I stood and gazed and asked questions of it. The sunset faded; the trees withdrew. The wind went by, but dropped no hint in my ear. The evening star leaped out between the clouds, and sealed the secret with a seal of splendor.

A favorite resort of mine, after dark, was the South Boston Bridge, across South Bay and the Old Colony Railroad. This was so near home that I could go there at any time when the confusion in the house drove me out, or I felt the need of fresh air. I liked to stand leaning on the bridge railing, and look down on the dim tangle of railroad tracks below. I could barely see them branching out, elbowing, winding, and sliding out into the night in pairs. I was fascinated by the dotted lights, the significant red and green of signal lamps. These simple things stood for a complexity that it made me dizzy to think of. Then the blackness below me was split by the fiery eye of a monster engine, his breath enveloped me in blinding clouds, his long body shot by, rattling a hundred claws of steel; and he was gone, with an imperative shriek that shook me where I stood.

So would I be, swift on my rightful business, picking out my proper track from the million that cross it, pausing for no obstacles, sure of my goal.

CHAPTER XIII

A KINGDOM IN THE SLUMS

DOVER STREET was never really my residence — at least, not the whole of it. It happened to be the nook where my bed was made, but I inhabited the City of Boston. In the pearl-misty morning, in the ruby-red evening, I was empress of all I surveyed from the roof of the tenement house. I could point in any direction and name a friend who would welcome me there. Off towards the northwest, in the direction of Harvard Bridge, which some day I should cross on my way to Radcliffe College, was one of my favorite palaces, whither I resorted every day after school.

A low, wide-spreading building with a dignified granite front it was, flanked on all sides by noble old churches, museums, and school-houses, harmoniously disposed around a spacious triangle, called Copley Square. Two thoroughfares that came straight from the green suburbs swept by my palace, one on either side, converged at the apex of the triangle, and pointed off, past the Public Garden, across the historic Common, to the domed State House sitting on a height.

It was my habit to go very slowly up the low, broad steps to the palace entrance, pleasing my eyes with the majestic lines of the building, and lingering to read again the carved inscriptions: *Public Library — Built by the People — Free to All.*

Did I not say it was my palace? Mine, because I was a citizen; mine, though I was born an alien; mine, though I lived on Dover Street. My palace — *mine!*

I loved to lean against a pillar in the entrance hall,

watching the people go in and out. Groups of children hushed their chatter at the entrance, and skipped, whispering and giggling in their fists, up the grand stairway, patting the great stone lions at the top, with an eye on the aged policemen down below. Spectacled scholars came slowly down the stairs, loaded with books, heedless of the lofty arches that echoed their steps. Visitors from out of town lingered long in the entrance hall, studying the inscriptions and symbols on the marble floor. And I loved to stand in the midst of all this, and remind myself that I was there, that I had a right to be there, that I was at home there. All these eager children, all these fine-browed women, all these scholars going home to write learned books — I and they had this glorious thing in common, this noble treasure house of learning. It was wonderful to say, *This is mine;* it was thrilling to say, *This is ours.*

I visited every part of the building that was open to the public. I spent rapt hours studying the Abbey pictures. I repeated to myself lines from Tennyson's poem before the glowing scenes of the Holy Grail. Before the "Prophets" in the gallery above I was mute, but echoes of the Hebrew Psalms I had long forgotten throbbed somewhere in the depths of my consciousness. The Chavannes series around the main staircase I did not enjoy for years. I thought the pictures looked faded, and their symbolism somehow failed to move me at first.

Bates Hall was the place where I spent my longest hours in the library. I chose a seat far at one end, so that looking up from my books I would get the full effect of the vast reading-room. I felt the grand spaces under the soaring arches as a personal attribute of my being.

The courtyard was my sky-roofed chamber of dreams. Slowly strolling past the endless pillars of

the colonnade, the fountain murmured in my ear of all the beautiful things in all the beautiful world. I imagined that I was a Greek of the classic days, treading on sandalled feet through the glistening marble porticoes of Athens. I expected to see, if I looked over my shoulder, a bearded philosopher in a drooping mantle, surrounded by beautiful youths with wreathed locks. Everything I read in school, in Latin or Greek, everything in my history books, was real to me here, in this courtyard set about with stately columns.

Here is where I liked to remind myself of Polotzk, the better to bring out the wonder of my life. That I who was born in the prison of the Pale [1] should roam at will in the land of freedom was a marvel that it did me good to realize. That I who was brought up to my teens almost without a book should be set down in the midst of all the books that ever were written was a miracle as great as any on record. That an outcast should become a privileged citizen, that a beggar should dwell in a palace — this was a romance more thrilling than poet ever sung. Surely I was rocked in an enchanted cradle.

From the Public Library to the State House is only a step, and I found my way there without a guide. The State House was one of the places I could point to and say that I had a friend there to welcome me. I do not mean the representative of my district, though I hope he was a worthy man. My friend was no less a man than the Honorable Senator Roe, from Worcester, whose letters to me, written under the embossed letter head of the Senate Chamber, I could not help exhibiting to my school friends.

[1] The *Pale of Settlement:* In Russia, the Jews are legally restricted as to residence to a number of specified provinces, comprising not more than a two-thousandth fraction of the Russian territory, although the Jews constitute one twenty-fourth of the population.

How did I come by a Senator? Through being a citizen of Boston, of course. To be a citizen of the smallest village in the United States which maintains a free school and a public library is to stand in the path of the splendid processions of opportunity. And as Boston has rather better schools and a rather finer library than some other villages, it comes natural there for children in the slums to summon gentlemen from the State House to be their personal friends.

It is so simple, in Boston! You are a school-girl, and your teacher gives you a ticket for the annual historical lecture in the Old South Church, on Washington's Birthday. You hear a stirring discourse on some subject in your country's history, and you go home with a heart bursting with patriotism. You sit down and write a letter to the speaker who so moved you, telling him how glad you are to be an American, explaining to him, if you happen to be a recently made American, why you love your adopted country so much better than your native land. Perhaps the patriotic lecturer happens to be a Senator, and he reads your letter under the vast dome of the State House; and it occurs to him that he and his eminent colleagues and the stately capitol and the glorious flag that floats above it, all gathered on the hill above the Common, do his country no greater honor than the outspoken admiration of an ardent young alien. The Senator replies to your letter, inviting you to visit him at the State House; and in the renowned chamber where the august business of the State is conducted, you, an obscure child from the slums, and he, a chosen leader of the people, seal a democratic friendship based on the love of a common flag.

Even simpler than to meet a Senator was it to become acquainted with a man like Edward Everett Hale. "The Grand Old Man of Boston," the people called

him, from the manner of his life among them. He kept open house in every public building in the city. Wherever two citizens met to devise a measure for the public weal, he was a third. Wherever a worthy cause needed a champion, Dr. Hale lifted his mighty voice At some time or another his colossal figure towered above an eager multitude from every pulpit in the city, from every lecture platform. And where is the map of Boston that gives the names of the lost alleys and backways where the great man went in search of the lame in body, who could not join the public assembly, in quest of the maimed in spirit, who feared to show their faces in the open? If all the little children who have sat on Dr. Hale's knee were started in a procession on the State House steps, standing four abreast, there would be a lane of merry faces across the Common, out to the Public Library, over Harvard Bridge, and away beyond to remoter landmarks.

That I met Dr. Hale is no wonder. It was as inevitable as that I should be a year older every twelve month. He was a part of Boston, as the salt wave is a part of the sea. I can hardly say whether he came to me or I came to him. We met, and my adopted country took me closer to her breast.

A day or two after our first meeting I called on Dr. Hale, at his invitation. It was only eight o'clock in the morning, you may be sure, because he had risen early to attend to a hundred great affairs, and I had risen early so as to talk with a great man before I went to school. I think we liked each other a little the more for the fact that when so many people were still asleep, we were already busy in the interests of citizenship and friendship. We certainly liked each other.

I am sure I did not stay more than fifteen minutes, and all that I recall of our conversation was that Dr. Hale asked me a great many questions about Russia,

in a manner that made me feel that I was an authority on the subject; and with his great hand in good-bye he gave me a bit of homely advice, namely, that I should never study before breakfast!

That was all, but for the rest of the day I moved against a background of grandeur. There was a noble ring to Virgil that day that even my teacher's firm translation had never brought out before. Obscure points in the history lesson were clear to me alone, of the thirty girls in the class. And it happened that the tulips in Copley Square opened that day, and shone in the sun like lighted lamps.

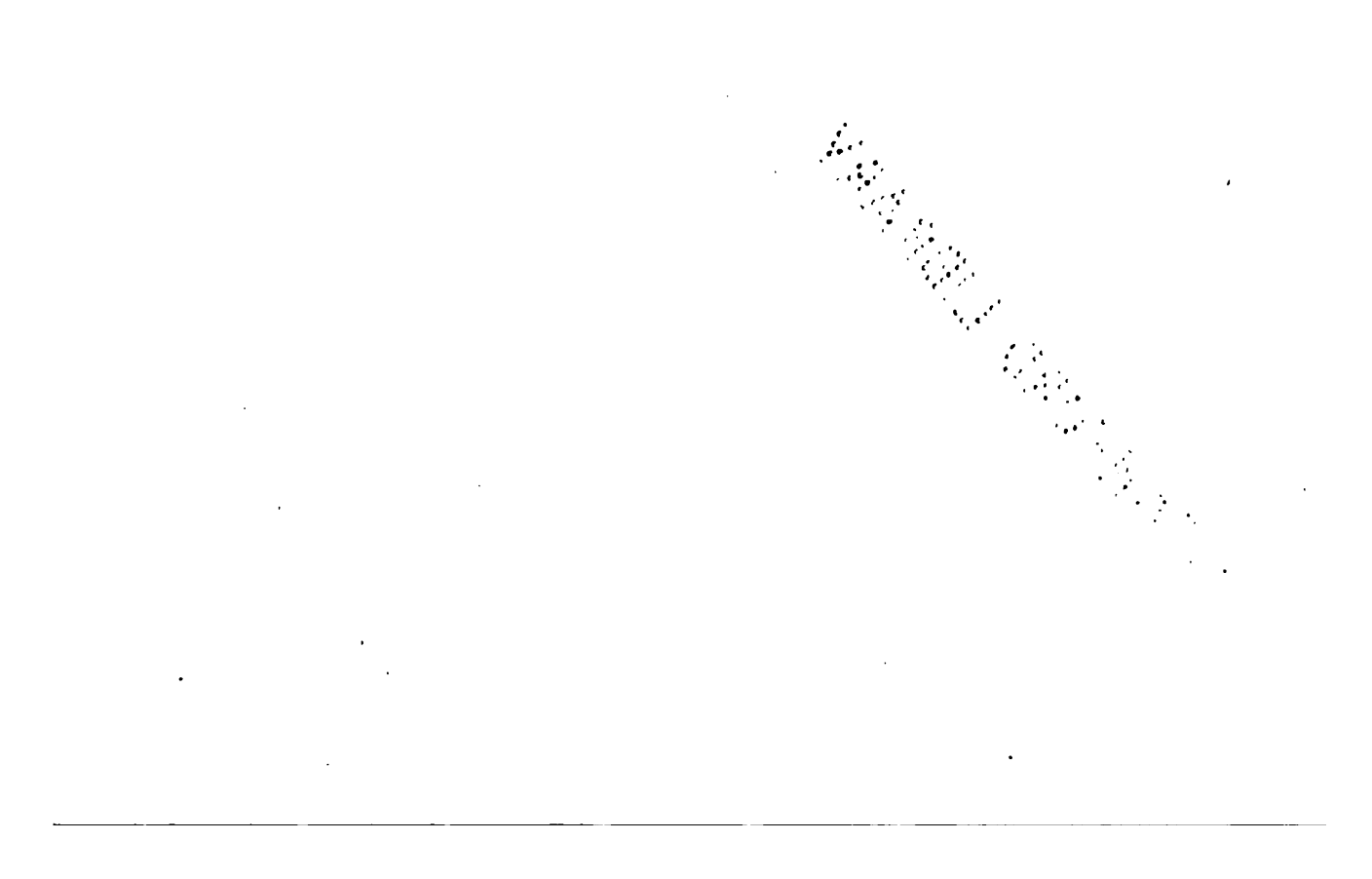
Any one could be happy a year on Dover Street, after spending half an hour on Highland Street. I enjoyed so many half-hours in the great man's house that I do not know how to convey the sense of my remembered happiness. My friend used to keep me in conversation a few minutes, in the famous study that was fit to have been preserved as a shrine; after which he sent me to roam about the house, and explore his library, and take away what books I pleased. Who would feel cramped in a tenement, with such royal privileges as these?

Once I brought Dr. Hale a present, a copy of a story of mine that had been printed in a journal; and from his manner of accepting it you might have thought that I was a princess dispensing gifts from a throne. I wish I had asked him, that last time I talked with him, how it was that he who was so modest made those who walked with him so great.

Modest as the man was the house in which he lived. A gray old house of a style that New England no longer builds, with a pillared porch curtained by vines, set back in the yard behind the old trees. Whatever cherished flowers glowed in the garden behind the house, the common daisy was encouraged to

bloom in front. And was there sun or snow on the ground, the most timid hand could open the gate, the most humble visitor was sure of a welcome. Out of that modest house the troubled came comforted, the fallen came uplifted, the noble came inspired.

From my little room on Dover Street I reached out for the world, and the world came to me. Through books, through the conversation of noble men and women, through communion with the stars in the depth of night, I entered into every noble chamber of the palace of life. I employed no charm to win admittance. The doors opened to me because I had a right to be within. My patent of nobility was the longing for the abundance of life with which I was endowed at birth; and from the time I could toddle unaided I had been gathering into my hand everything that was fine in the world around me. Given health and standing-room, I should have worked out my salvation even on a desert island. Being set down in the garden of America, where opportunity waits on ambition, I was bound to make my days a triumphal march toward my goal. The most unfriendly witness of my life will not venture to deny that I have been successful. For aside from subordinate desires for greatness or wealth or specific achievement, my chief ambition in life has been *to live*, and I have lived. A glowing life has been mine, and the fires that blazed highest in all my days were kindled on Dover Street.



GLOSSARY

KEY TO PRONUNCIATION

a	as in man	u	as in circus
ä	" " far	ū	" " mute
e	" " met	u̇	" " pull
ē	" " meet	ai	" " aisle
ĕ	" long *e* in German Leder	oi	" " joint
i	" in pin	ch	" " German ach, Scotch loch
ī	" " file	ḫ	" " " " " "
o	" " not	ī	" " failure
ō	" " note	ñ	" " cañon
ö	" " German König	zh	" z in seizure

Explanations

The abbreviations *Germ.* (= German), *Hebr.* (= Hebrew), *Russ.* (= Russian), and *Yid.* (= Yiddish) indicate the origin of a word. Most of the names marked *Yiddish* are such in form only, the roots being for the most part Hebrew.

Prop. n. = proper name.

The ending *ke* of Yiddish proper names (Mashke, Fetchke) has a diminutive or endearing value, like the German *chen* (Helenchen).

Double names are given under the first name.

Dvina (dvē′-nä), sometimes written Düna (dē′-nä), *Russ.* Name of a river that runs through the city of Polotzk.

Eidtkuhnen (eit-koo′-ñen), *Germ.* Name of a Russo-German frontier town.

Fetchke (fĕtch′-ke), *Yid.* Prop. n.

Hannah Hayye (ḥän′-a ḥai′-e), *Hebr.* Prop. n.

Haveh Mirel (ḥa′-ve mir̈l), *Hebr.* and *Yid.* Prop. n.

Heder (hē′-der), *Hebr.* Elementary Hebrew School, usually held at the teacher's residence.

Kibart (ki-bärt′), *Russ.* Name of a town.

Kopeck (kọ′-pek), *Russ.* A copper coin, the $\frac{1}{100}$ part of a ruble, worth about half a cent.

Kosher (ko′-sher), *Hebr.* Clean, according to Jewish ritual law; opposed to **tref**, unclean. Applied chiefly to articles of diet and cooking and eating vessels.

Maryashe (mär-yä′-she), *Yid.* Prop. n.

Mashke (mäsh′-ke), *Yid.* Prop. n.

Nu! (nä), *Yid.* Here you are! Take it!

Passport, foreign. A special passport required of any Russian subject wishing to go to a foreign country. To avoid the necessity of procuring such a passport, travellers often cross the border by stealth.

Polota (po-lo-tä'), *Russ.* Name of a river.

Polotzk (po'-lotzk), *Russ.*, also spelled Polotsk. A town in the government of Vitebsk, Russia, since early times a Jewish settlement. *N.B.* Polotzk must not be confused with Plotzk (also spelled Plock), the capital of the government of Plotzk, in Russian Poland, about 400 miles southwest of Polotzk.

Reb' (reb), *Yid.* An abbreviation of *rebbe*, used as a title of respect, equivalent to the old-fashioned English "master."

Rebbe (reb'-e), *Yid.* Colloquial form of *rabbi*. A Hebrew teacher. Applied usually to teachers of lesser rank.

Trefah (trĕf'-a), *Hebr.* Unclean, according to ritual law; opposed to **kosher**, clean. Chiefly applied to articles of food and eating and cooking vessels.

Versbolovo (vers-bo-lo'-vă), *Russ.* Name of a town.

Vilna (vil'-nă), *Russ.* Name of a city.

Vitebsk (vi'-tebsk), *Russ.* Name of a city.

Yachne (yăch'-ne), *Yid.* Prop. n.

Yiddish (yid'-ish), *Yid.* Judeo-German, the language of the Jews of Eastern Europe. The basis is an archaic form of German, on which are grafted many words of Hebrew origin, and words from the vernacular of the country.

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